CAUSES OF MORMON NON-MORMON CONFLICT IN
HANCOCK COUNTY, ILLINOIS, 1839-1846

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by
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ABSTRACT

Mormon-Gentile difficulties in Illinois were the result of a combination of many factors. One of the major reasons was the lawless tradition prevalent in that section of the country. Like other frontier states, Illinois had a tradition of violence; and extra-legal groups banding together for a common goal was not uncommon. Continual rumors circulated that Nauvoo headquartered a den of thieves, was the center of a counterfeiting ring and was filled with ruthless lawbreakers. Such reports gave people a moral excuse to harass the Saints. That the Mormons retaliated after being attacked by others produced even greater problems.

The anti-Mormon activities of John C. Bennett, Wilson Law, William Law, Joseph Jackson and others also contributed to the conflict. False accusations postulated by these men stating that they knew the Prophet was an adulterer, murderer, counterfeiter and thief gave some people a moral excuse for engaging in activities against the Mormons.

Another contributing factor relative to the clash between the two groups can be traced to economic difficulties. Nauvoo became the largest and most prosperous city in Illinois, causing rivalry and jealousy on the part of other Hancock County communities. The prosperity of Nauvoo was exaggerated when compared to many other cities which
were suffering from a severe depression. There was also a desire on the part of a few individuals to acquire productive Mormon land. It was believed that if the Saints could be forced from the state, their fertile fields and comfortable homes would fall into their hands.

Peculiar religious beliefs held by Latter-day Saints caused some of the difficulties they experienced in Illinois. Such doctrines as plural marriage, the gathering, the belief in the scriptural quality of the Book of Mormon and the concept that the Kingdom of God was a political kingdom led to further hostility.

Mormon Masonic activities precipitated further accusations and outbreaks of animosity. Church leaders were accused of breaking their Masonic vows, and apparently members of that fraternity felt no compulsion to heed the Prophet's cry of distress issued shortly before he was killed.

Mormon political power, exaggerated because the Saints usually voted as a bloc, was another principal cause of hostility. The Prophet's nomination and active campaign for the presidency of the United States added to this conflict which was intensified with reports that he had been ordained "King of the World" by the Council of Fifty.

Perhaps in retrospect both Mormons and non-Mormons were to blame for the disharmony which developed between them. The Mormons were sometimes boastful of their political power, frequently declared they were the chosen people of God, tended to trade in a commercial way only with themselves, promulgated a large army and engaged in a
marriage system held by Gentiles to be adulterous. The Gentiles blamed the Mormons for almost every crime committed in Hancock County. said Joseph Smith was a dictator and believed themselves justified in opposing him without waiting to determine the truth or falsity of numerous accusations. Charges were formulated, writs secured and the Prophet was brought to Carthage for trial. Following Governor Ford's departure for Nauvoo, the Mormon leader was shot and killed by an angry mob and two years later many of his followers were driven from the state.
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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

The United States has often been described as a land of religious liberty, a country where all men may worship God according to the dictates of their own consciences. In spite of this reputation, many religious groups have suffered under the yoke of persecution. Baptists, Quakers, Catholics and Mormons have experienced this kind of bigotry. The frontier regions of the United States were especially noted for their lack of toleration. Much of the early history of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints took place on the frontier, and many of its members suffered persecution. Their stay in Illinois, which could perhaps be described as a frontier state in the 1840's, was periodically interrupted by acts of violence and harassment.

Although much has been written about the Mormon Church in Illinois no author has attempted to probe extensively the reasons for the Mormon's expulsion from that state. Writers have analyzed the legality of the destruction of the Nauvoo Expositor, Mormon political


activity, Mormons and Masons, and the rhetorical aspects of the Mormon conflict, yet none have attempted to answer in detail the questions of why the Mormons as a religious group were persecuted in Illinois. Richard Bushman, in his article on "Mormon Persecutions in Missouri, 1833," did a pioneering work in this general area, but his study was limited to Jackson County. Mark Cannon attempted to treat this subject during the Utah period of Latter-day Saint history; and David B. Davies was outstanding in probing the reasons why Mormons, Catholics and Masons were persecuted but, like Cannon's, his work was


largely centered on the Utah period of the Church's history. 7

Some books and monographs have appeared giving either the Mormon or the Gentile side of the conflict in Illinois. But no study has appeared that correlates the two sides and attempts to determine exactly why the two groups could not live together in peace. There were Methodists, Baptists, Presbyterians, and Congregationalists living in comparative tranquility so why were the Mormons singled out as objects of ridicule and hatred? Why did a religious leader suffer death at the hands of a "mob?" And why were his followers forced to abandon their homes and farms, shops and stores, and brave the hardships of a thousand mile journey into a land owned and governed by Mexico?

This study will attempt to answer these questions and will probe in detail the reasons for the Mormon non-Mormon conflict in Hancock County, Illinois, during the years 1839-1846. Mormon conflict in other areas of Illinois or in Iowa will not be discussed. Furthermore, only those factors generally considered to be of major importance will become a part of the material presented.

"Mormon," "the Church," and "Saints" will be used interchangeably and will refer to members of The Church of Jesus Christ of

Latter-day Saints or to the Church itself. In this study, "Gentiles" will refer to non-members of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. "Jack Mormon" was a term used during 1839-1846 to describe a person friendly to the Mormons and this usage will be employed in this study. Unless otherwise designated, "the Prophet" will refer to Joseph Smith, Jr.

In objective historical writing all mystical experiences and revelations should be dealt with by using such qualifying adjectives as assumed, alleged, averred or declared. In order to avoid the too frequent use of these terms they will not always be included in this work when referring to spiritual experiences. Even though these adjectives are missing at times this does not mean that historical proof beyond refutation or doubt is in the possession of the author. Rather their use has been avoided to facilitate reading the material.

Inasmuch as many other works have treated the historical development of Mormonism, this study will assume that the reader is familiar with the early history of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. However, because the Kirtland and Missouri periods of Mormon activity had such an impact on events in Hancock County one chapter will be devoted to a brief review of the Mormon difficulties there as they relate to the Illinois period of Church history.
CHAPTER II

MORMON HISTORY 1830-1838

The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints had its inception in New York in what has been called the "Burned-over District."\(^1\) This region, however, did not remain the center of Mormon activity. Partly because of tremendous Church growth in the Western Reserve, a revelation from God, early unsuccessful missionary labors in the New England area, and mob violence, the headquarters of the Church was moved to Kirtland, Ohio, early in 1831.\(^2\) Another branch of the Church was organized in Missouri about the same time; and for the next eight years, Missouri and Ohio vied with each other as centers of Church activity. Problems of communication and transportation made it difficult for Joseph Smith to administer Church affairs in these two areas separated by almost a thousand miles. Inasmuch as Joseph Smith left Kirtland in the winter of 1838 and subsequently left Missouri in the spring of 1839, this study will summarize Latter-day Saint activity in Kirtland and then


deal with items of importance in northern Missouri.

The initial proselyting work in the Ohio region was performed by Parley P. Pratt, Oliver Cowdery, Ziba Peterson and Peter Whitmer, Jr. Probably due to Elder Pratt's influence, these four men visited the area in and around Kirtland on their way to the "borders of the Lamanites." Their missionary activities met with success, and in the spring of 1831 it was estimated by some that Church membership in Ohio was about one thousand. After the arrival of Joseph Smith, Emma Smith, Sidney Rigdon, and Edward Partridge in 1831 the eyes of most Mormons centered on Kirtland--there a temple would be built, revelations would be received, the "school of the Prophets" would be held in the winter months and the newly organized Church would practice or attempt to practice a new economic system called the Law of Consecration.

In spite of its growth, Mormonism was never very popular with a majority of Ohio's citizens. Rumors of unusual marriage customs helped bring about this unpopularity. The Mormon belief in continual revelation also aroused public indignation. The Painesville Telegraph, for example, found frequent opportunity to challenge the Mormon claim

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⁴Max Parkin, "Conflict in Kirtland" (Master's thesis, Brigham Young University, 1966), pp. 344-351.
to direct revelation from God. 5 Joseph Smith was often referred to as a "false prophet" or a "pretended prophet," and other periodicals in Ohio joined the chorus of doubters. Wounds of conflict were further opened because members of the Church testified that The Book of Mormon was scripture. Moreover, peculiar views regarding the millennium and its supposed advent within fifteen years caused some to ridicule gullible believers. 6

Another source of religious irritation was the belief in and practice of spiritual gifts. Misguided members of the Church would lie in the snow in spiritual trances, crawl on the floor like snakes, or act like Indians in their quest for a spiritual experience. Others would swing from the ceiling like baboons and then swoon on the floor after which glorious revelations were reported to on-lookers. Heavenly choirs, some members said, sang at Mormon meetings; and their baptismal font, a lake, was reported to have had a ring of fire over it for almost a month. These excesses of religious zeal created problems for the Church both within and without. 7 Some members were offended when they were informed by Church leaders that they should discontinue unorthodox spiritual activities, and non-Mormons were led to scoff at these strange displays of religious faith.

Conflict between the Whigs and the Mormons arose because Mormons supported the Democratic Party. The activities of the Whigs in

5Ibid., p. 49.
6Idem.
7Idem.
opposition to the Church only strengthened Mormon ties with the Demo-
crats. These ties remained until a Democratic president, Martin Van
Buren, refused to help Latter-day Saints secure redress from alleged
Gentile wrongs in Missouri, and the Mormons in at least one election
voted for the Whigs. But in Kirtland, Whigs and Mormons were often
opposed to each other. The Whig newspapers frequently contained
articles that bitterly attacked the Church, largely because of its politics. 8

In 1836 a spirit of speculation prevailed throughout the country.
This caused a severe depression. Shortly before this national depression
occurred a depression afflicted the Mormons in Ohio. To partly alleviate
this problem, Mormon leaders established a bank which was called the
Kirtland Safety Society. This business not only failed to solve the
economic plight of the people but collapsed, aggravating the economic
situation in Kirtland. Joseph Smith was blamed by some for its failure.
In defense of his actions, the Prophet reminded his critics that he had
warned the people to cease their wild speculation and noted that one of
the managers had stolen essential assets from this company. Some who
lost their investments refused to endorse the Prophet's defense and
united to destroy Joseph Smith and the Church he founded. 9

8Ibid., p. 349.

9For a discussion of this problem see Kent R. Fielding, "The
Growth of the Mormon Church in Kirtland, Ohio" (Ph.D. dissertation,
Indiana University, 1957).
In the winter of 1838 the Prophet and Sidney Rigdon were forced to flee from apostate mobocracy, others followed and Kirtland was never again the center of Mormon Church activity.

While the Church grew in Ohio, the Saints in Missouri experienced difficulties with their neighbors. As early as April, 1833, anti-Mormons circulated falsehoods regarding an alleged Mormon alliance with the Indians. Further rumors were dissipated that the Mormons were the common "enemies of mankind." Church members were accused of being poor, of believing in continual revelation, of manifesting spiritual gifts, of being from the north and thus opposing slavery, and engaging in unusual economic activities. Another major reason Mormons were persecuted in Jackson County, Missouri, was because they were becoming a significant political force.

In the summer of 1833 anti-Mormon forces demanded that the Saints leave the county, cease publishing the Evening and Morning Star and prevent further Mormon immigration into the country. Following repeated attacks on Mormon settlements, the Saints left their homes in Jackson County and settled in Clay County, Missouri. Their leaders continued to appeal to the governor and the courts of the state, hoping to receive compensation for their losses. They were hesitant to sell their lands in Jackson County because they believed that there a temple would be built in preparation for the millennial reign of Christ. The

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10Smith, p. 152.

11Bushman, pp. 11-20.
Prophet received a revelation which told the Saints that partly because of their sins Jackson County was not as yet Zion.\textsuperscript{12}

Following their stay in Clay County many of the Saints in 1836 settled, without any disturbance, in northern Missouri. Prior to moving from Clay County, the Mormons obtained, from the older inhabitants of the area, permission to settle in northern Ray County. The residents of Missouri were so amenable to the move that a special county, Caldwell, was created for the Mormons. Eventually old time residents asserted that the Saints had agreed to settle only in the "Mormon County."\textsuperscript{13} Mormons claimed that no such agreement was made, and this dispute became a source of contention when the Saints claimed the right to settle in other parts of the state.

The years 1836-1839 were filled with activity for the Latter-day Saints. During this period they purchased, colonized, and developed large tracts of land in northern Missouri. There was still some feeling among these people that somehow the Lord would help them regain their lost land in Jackson County. Meanwhile, Far West became the leading Mormon city.

Gentile merchants, anxious to ply their trade, extended generous amounts of credit to Mormon retailers. The financial prospects of the

\textsuperscript{12}The Doctrine and Covenants (Salt Lake City: The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, 1952), 105:9, hereafter cited as D. & C.

Latter-day Saints in Missouri was never better. Yet the Saints continued to be plagued with monetary problems. Lawyers who had represented them, now demanded payment for their services. Since some had come to Missouri hoping to find material prosperity through the Law of Consecration, many poor people had to be given financial help.

By 1838 the Church had troubles from both within and without. Dissenters were causing considerable concern for Joseph Smith and other Church leaders. The Whitmers, William E. McLellin, Martin Harris, Orson Hyde, and W. W. Phelps, all prominent in early Church history, ceased to support Joseph Smith as leader of the Church and were excommunicated. Oliver Cowdery, who had witnessed so many of the Prophet's early visions, also became disgruntled and was excommunicated. Following their excommunication, some of the dissenters initiated a campaign to discredit the leadership of the Church. Joseph Smith was particularly singled out as an object of wrath. Meetings were held by this group, and another attempt was made to establish a new church.

During this turbulent era, a secret society was organized which adopted the name "Danites." At first its avowed purpose was to save the Church and destroy the enemies of the Prophet and his followers. But gradually zeal overcame prudence, and this group began retaliating against alleged abuses by Missourians, thereby inciting increased anti-Mormon feeling in that state.

The rapid migration of Mormons into counties which Gentiles maintained were for non-Mormons caused some anxiety. Political fears
also resulted in deep resentments. But these fears were largely symptomatic of a deeper sickness, namely, a repugnance for almost all that was thought to be Mormon. The general unpopularity of the Latter-day Saints, together with their unusual religious and social practices, added to the grievances. Few non-Mormons it seems took the time or the effort to inquire into the truth of many idle tales about the Saints which were widely circulated. A social breakdown between the two groups occurred.

The first open battle erupted at Gallatin on August 6, 1838. This was election day and an attempt was made to prevent Mormons from voting. A fight ensued, and distorted rumors of this conflict circulated throughout Missouri. Soon fighting commenced in other areas of the state. At the first sign of retaliation, the Gentiles said the Mormons were destroying everything in their path. The residents in neighboring counties were called to help stop the ravages of the "infuriated fanatics."

At length the Saints came to the conclusion that there was no law for them in Missouri. It seemed that whenever they defended themselves they were labeled aggressors. Their leaders on occasion gave full vent to their feelings which led to further hostility against them. Mormon speakers were critical of Governor Boggs and the manner in which the courts administered the law. These speeches only added fuel to the fire of conflict. Finally the governor issued an order to the commander of the state militia to either exterminate or drive the Mormons from the state.
Once it was made clear that the Saints would have to leave they made every effort to expedite their departure. The impoverished condition of more than ten thousand persons rendered the undertaking one of enormous proportions. Brigham Young and other Church leaders directed the move from Missouri, and individuals blessed with material goods helped those who were less fortunate. Again the Mormons had been unable to live peaceably with their neighbors.

As the emigrants made their way, they knew not where, their Prophet was in prison charged with treason, their homes were lost, part of their property confiscated, and at least some of their loved ones buried in the area which they thought was to be Zion. The future was bleak, but there was hope because the Prophet was still alive; and they still had a conviction that what he taught was true.

Finally in the spring of 1839, when Joseph Smith was being moved to Broome County for trial, the Prophet escaped and promptly made his way to Quincy, Illinois, where many of his followers migrated after their expulsion from Missouri.

Upon arriving in Illinois, many Mormons were confident that among a sympathetic people they could dwell in comparative tranquility. The Quincy Democratic Association’s warm welcome increased their confidence. The populace of Illinois seemed to desire their numbers, industry and thrift. Soon, they secured deeds to land located in and around the small town of Commerce. There they began building a city which was
named Nauvoo and labeled by one writer a "Kingdom on the Missis-
sippi."\textsuperscript{14}

\textsuperscript{14}Robert B. Flanders, \textit{Nauvoo, Kingdom on the Mississippi} (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1965).
CHAPTER III

ILLINOIS BEFORE THE ARRIVAL OF THE MORMONS

Prior to the conquest of the west by George Rogers Clark, few Americans had visited Illinois, but following his victory some hearty pioneers began to move into that region, braving the swift current of the Mississippi and the diseases of the lowlands. The war with Great Britain in 1812 brought Illinois even more notoriety. After this war settlers poured into the land that had once been occupied almost solely by Indians and Catholic missionaries. Extending from Alton to the mouth of the Kaskaskia River, this region is perhaps the largest and most fertile body of alluvial soil in the United States.¹ From this area settlers spread to the rocky bluff southeast of Cahokia and to St. Louis.

By 1818 a petition had been "received from the territorial legislature of Illinois by Nathaniel Pope . . . praying for the admission of the Territory [of Illinois] "as an independent state."² Pope presented this petition to the Congress of the United States; and following some discussion relative to the boundaries of the proposed state, an enabling act


was passed and a constitutional convention called. The constitution formulated was much like those of other states, and in 1818 Illinois achieved statehood.

The total population at this time (1818) was about 45,000. Two thousand of these were descendants of the old French settlers in the villages of Kaskaskia, Prairie Du Rocher, Prairie Du Pont, Cahokia, Peoria and Chicago. These people farmed in common, built houses and lived in the peasant style of France. The American inhabitants were chiefly from Kentucky, Virginia and Pennsylvania. Some of them had been officers and soldiers under General George Rogers Clark. Soldiers, who had defended the area in the War of 1812, increased the population to about twelve thousand in that same year.

Before statehood the pursuits of the people were primarily agricultural. Farmers raised their own provisions and seldom relied on merchants except for a few necessities and luxuries which were not produced on their farms. Farmers usually built their own houses, generally log cabins, wherein their wives spun their own cloth while the husbands made their own boots. The furniture was largely homemade and often consisted of a few chairs, a table and a bed.

Regular commerce was nearly unknown. Until 1817 everything of foreign growth or manufacture had been brought from New Orleans in

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3 Ibid., p. 35.
4 Ibid., p. 42.
keel boats. When people began to pour into Illinois following the conclusion of the War of 1812, they brought with them money and property and introduced some changes in the customs and modes of living. Before the War of 1812, skins of deer and raccoon were the medium of exchange whereas following the war, money was brought into the territory. This money seemed to give the people ideas and aspirations. By 1819 the whole state was in a spirit of land speculation. Illinois had only two banks at this time, one in Edwardsville and the other in Shawneetown.⁵ These banks together with two in St. Louis made money plentiful. The holders of the money used it to build unneeded houses and purchase land which was not cultivated because of a lack of laborers. "This was called developing the infant resources of a new country."⁶

There was a severe depression in 1820; and to offset its impact, the Illinois legislature created a state bank. It was founded without capital, wholly on the credit of the state. The bank was directed by law to lend up to one hundred dollars on personal security. In the summer of 1821 this new bank went into operation. Every man who could get an endorser borrowed his hundred dollars. The directors of the bank were all politicians and lending money to everybody seemed to be the surest way to popularity. Soon the money declined in value and more than half of those who had borrowed considered what they had received as clear

⁵Ibid., p. 43.
⁶Idem.
gain, never repaying the money. 7

Prior to 1830 political parties began to form in Illinois. Governor Ninian Edwards, Daniel P. Cook and Judge Nathaniel Pope constituted the heads of one party while Governor Benjamin Bond, Elias K. Kane, John M'Lean, and Judge Richard Thomas headed the other. When Daniel Duncan ran as a Jacksonian Democrat in the election of 1826 party politics was introduced into the state; and after that time Whigs and Democrats vied with each other for political power.

About 1830 a new kind of minister came to Illinois. These new "servants of Christ" were active in establishing societies which were of a benevolent nature. They endeavored to promote education among the people and undertook to build colleges and seminaries of learning. But the prejudice against them was so great that they did not succeed in establishing schools for several years.

The legislature of 1832-33 was distinguished for its efforts to construct railroads throughout the state. Several charters were passed to incorporate railroad companies and an effort was made to procure a charter for a railroad from Lake Michigan to the Illinois River. None of these charters were secured but the groundwork had been laid for a railway system.

By 1834 many people were industrious and seemed content with the usual profits of labor, skill and capital. They were largely free from debt and the treasury of the state was solvent and paid all demands in

7Ibid., p. 47.
cash. The 1834 session of the legislature undertook to better the condition of public and private affairs by chartering a new state bank. This, in the opinion of Governor Ford, was the beginning of all the incompetent legislation which followed and resulted in a general depression. Another important matter acted upon by this legislature was the construction of the Illinois and Michigan canal. George Forquer, chairman of the committee on internal improvements, prepared and made an elaborate report in favor of a loan of half a million dollars on the credit of the state. The report was accompanied by a bill authorizing such a loan. This bill passed the senate and probably would have passed the house except the governor in his general message asserted with confidence that the money could be obtained upon a pledge of the canal lands. Amended in this particular, the bill passed and served as a model for subsequent laws on the subject. 8 The loan under this law failed, but a special session in 1835 passed another bill, introduced by James M. Strode, which authorized a loan of half a million dollars on the credit of the state. This loan was negotiated by Governor Joseph Duncan in 1836 and with this money the canal was begun in June of that year.

In the spring and summer of 1836 the great land and town lot speculation reached Illinois. It commenced in Chicago and then spread to the rest of the state. New cities were laid out in every direction. The number of communities multiplied so rapidly that some people remarked optimistically that shortly the whole state would be laid out

8Ibid., p. 180.
into towns.

The legislature of 1836-37 devised and recommended an internal improvement system whose chief feature was that it would be commensurate with the wants of the people. Thus in the course of the winter a system providing for railroads from Galena to the mouth of the Ohio; from Alton to Shawneetown; from Alton to Mount Carmel; from Alton to the eastern boundary of the state in the direction of Terre Haute; and from Quincy on the Mississippi through Springfield to Warsaw. Approximately 1,300 miles of road was charted. The legislature also provided for the improvement of the navigation of the Kaskaskia, Illinois, Great and Little Wabash and Rock rivers. In addition, two hundred thousand dollars was to be distributed among those counties through which no roads or improvements were to be made. The legislature voted $8,000,000 for this program, which was to be raised by loans.⁹

As a part of the system the canal from Chicago to Peru was to be completed and a further loan of four million dollars was authorized for this purpose. The completion of this waterway suffered in the following respects. (1) It bogged down in politics and the measures received less than whole-hearted support from the citizens of Illinois. (2) There were not enough citizens in the state to be burdened with so large a debt. And (3) it was difficult to find competent people to serve as managers for such an extensive improvement system. Thus by 1840 the state had contracted a debt of $14,237,348.

⁹Ibid., pp. 182-184.
Regarding this period Professor John H. Drenkel wrote:

With the advent of railroad building in the eastern states, proposals for the construction of railroads by chartered companies was begun in Illinois. The inability of the corporations to raise money and the feeling then prevailing throughout the country that transportation monopolies should not be placed in the hands of private companies led to a demand for state construction of internal improvements. These factors, together with the example of other states and the speculative spirit current in 1836, induced the state of Illinois to undertake an extensive system of public works far too costly for her resources and out of proportion to the needs of a frontier people.\(^{10}\)

By 1841 the state finances were in such a deplorable condition that no further attempt was made to pay the interest on the public debt.

In February, 1842, the state bank, with a circulation of three million dollars, crashed. In June the bank of Shawneetown followed suit and the paper money issued by these two banks was worthless. Thus the people were left without money until trade with other areas partially replenished the supply. The people, in the early 1840's, found themselves in the midst of a severe depression.

Illinois, like most frontier regions, had its share of violence and bigotry. In 1816-1817 the towns of the territory were overrun with horsethieves and counterfeiters. They were so numerous and so well organized in some areas that they defied the law.\(^{11}\) The rogues had numerous friends even among those who were not suspect. Some of the

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\(^{11}\) Ford, p. 231.
sheriffs, justices of the peace and constables were alligned with these rogues as were judges of county courts. When arrested, culprits either escaped from jail or were declared innocent by juries composed of members of their gang. The people formed into revolutionary tribunals under the name of regulators and on occasions governor's and judges of the territory, seeing the impossibility of executing the laws in the ordinary way against these organized "banditti," either ignored or encouraged their proceedings.¹²

These regulators, generally numbering about one-hundred men, were organized in military fashion. They usually operated at night and after assembling marched to the residence of a thief, arrested, tried and punished him either by severe whipping or banishment.

In this manner many of the lawbreakers were expelled from the territory. A few people believed that a disorganized frontier society required such proceedings and they were not only justifiable but necessary for the existence of government.

In spite of the best efforts of the regulators, bands of robbers still remained in Pope, Massa and other counties bordering on the Ohio River as late as 1835. In 1837 Mr. Alton Lovejoy, who operated an abolitionist press, was murdered by a mob who disagreed with the views expressed in his paper. According to some accounts two leading Presbyterian ministers were the instigators of the mob action against Lovejoy.¹³

¹²Idem.
¹³Tbid., p. 221.
Previous to 1840 marauders were rife in the northern part of the state. Residents in that area settled on public land without obtaining proper title. This land was neither surveyed nor for sale; yet they made valuable improvements by building mills, operating farms and founding villages. A "convention law" of each neighborhood pledged the settlers to protect each other in the amount of their respective claims. But there were men who disregarded these arrangements. These men had little regard for public opinion and consciences did not restrain them from jumping a neighbor's claim. Consequently, settlers armed to protect themselves from thieves in almost every county.

There was also a considerable number of organized bands of murderers, robbers and horse stealers in the counties of Ogle, Winnebago, Lee and DeKalb. In the county of Ogle, for example, they were so numerous, strong and well organized, that they could not be convicted for their crimes. As late as 1841 a group charged with various infractions was rescued when other members of the gang burned the jail allowing the prisoners to escape.\(^14\)

This mobocratic spirit, many said, originated because the laws failed to provide remedies for great evils and was slow and uncertain. Another reason for this lawlessness was that men engaged in unpopular projects often expected more protection from the law than officers were able to furnish in the face of popular excitement. Even though the constitution guaranteed to each individual his rights, the magistrates were

\(^{14}\)Ibid., p. 247.
unable to enforce the law.

Edward Bonney, in a book entitled Banditti of the Prairie, discussed some of the lawlessness that existed in and around Hancock County, Illinois.\textsuperscript{15} He wrote that there were organized bands of murderers, thieves and counterfeiters from 1840-1850, that preyed on the citizens at almost every opportunity. David Miller, writing of this period, confirmed this view by stating,

Frontier Illinois of that time was harassed by organized rogues who became powerful enough in some areas to control the courts and thus insure against punishment.\textsuperscript{16}

It was into such an environment that Joseph Smith moved with his people in 1839. The Mormons were given a sympathetic welcome by the citizens of Quincy. This welcome was sympathetic because of the suffering the Mormons had endured in Missouri. It was also a sympathy nourished on hope, hope that this people would help alleviate the debts that had been incurred by past legislators, a hope that one of the political parties would benefit from the large increase of potential voters, and finally hope that land speculators and merchants would materially benefit from the immigration of a people that needed clothes, food, homes and farms. Perhaps hope was greatest among land speculators like Horace Hotchkiss who helped entice the Mormons to settle in Commerce,

\textsuperscript{15}Edward Bonney, The Banditti of the Prairie (Chicago: W. B. Conkey Company, 1848).

\textsuperscript{16}David E. Miller, Westward Migration of the Mormons With Special Emphasis on the History of Nauvoo (Report submitted to the National Park Service, 1963), p. 166.
a town that he had been attempting to develop at least since 1837. 17

The Mormons moved into a state that needed people, that had a
tradition of lawlessness and among a people who were accustomed to
taking the law into their own hands when the occasion seemed to demand
action.

Illinois had an election law that allowed all immigrants to vote
after six months residence in the state. Politicians were fearful that
this law was too liberal and some charged that the Irish-Catholics who
had been imported into Illinois to work on the canals were under the
thumb of party politicians. It was charged that like sheep these people
voted in blocs with little regard for the issues. Mormons were also
accused of bloc voting.

Although the Saints were welcomed into Illinois, conditions soon
developed which led to their expulsion. Five years after their arrival
in that state their Prophet was dead and within seven years the Mormon
exodus from Illinois had commenced.

17 Mr. John Gillette to Horace R. Hotchkiss, July 10, 1838;
December 5, 1838; December 26, 1838; and April 23, 1841, located in
the Illinois State Historical Library, Springfield, Illinois.
CHAPTER IV

THE POLITICAL IDEAS OF JOSEPH SMITH

Introduction

Joseph Smith was sometimes accused of endorsing political ideas that were wildly different from those of his contemporaries. This was one of the reasons, some have suggested, for so much conflict while the Mormons lived in Illinois. After the Prophet published, in February, 1844, his political impressions in a pamphlet entitled "Views on the Powers and Policy of the Government of the United States," a reporter writing in the Niles' National Register said this "treatise on government" was a "conglomeration of hope mingled with fear that would agitate the whole nation and cause the earth to quake and the sea to heave beyond its bounds."¹ Governor Thomas Ford also accused Joseph Smith of promulgating "unusual political ideas that bordered on the absurd."² In evaluating the Prophet's thoughts regarding statecraft, another analyst wrote, "it seems almost incomprehensible that the promulgation of such political views, under the conditions of the time could have been

¹Niles' National Register (Washington, D. C.), March 23, 1844.
²Ford, p. 321.
taken seriously.\textsuperscript{3}

When Joseph Smith's political thoughts are evaluated and contrasted with the political ideas of his contemporaries, it is difficult to effectively demonstrate that he was a political theorist who held unique ideas. For the most part his concept of government was not a "conglomeration of hope mingled with fear" nor was it "incomprehensible" but on the contrary represented the main current of early nineteenth century American political thought.

**Joseph Smith's Concept of Man**

Frequently political theories reflect in part the author's concept of man. Thinkers have espoused radically different sentiments regarding man. Some have said that he is by nature evil and hence unfit to govern himself; others that he is a good, rational being, hence, capable of self government; and still others say that man has no nature, he is good or bad depending on his environment and the external forces that shape his life.

Joseph Smith contended that man is not totally depraved but is in some respects fundamentally good and able to achieve salvation.\textsuperscript{4} The


majority of men prefer to do good and would pursue a correct course were it not for the evil power that subjects them in its sway. The Prophet seems to have accepted the Lockean idea of government that man is good and suited for democracy or self rule. The confident optimism of Jefferson is also mirrored in the Prophet's view of man. Each person, he said, is a child of God born with the light of Christ, and although "all men are subject to oppression the body was specifically created by God and given to man to arm him against the powers of darkness." However, the Prophet also believed that individuals were not capable of governing themselves without the help of their Father in Heaven. He once remarked, "good government needs the wisdom of God, the intelligence of God, and the power of God." He seems to be arguing that all nations, if they are to have the proper government, must receive inspiration from Diety. Those who seek to know His will and


7Janosik, p. 55.

8Minutes of a meeting held January 10, 1840, ULF.

then do it can be good rulers, and good government will follow. Furthermore, he argues, government should seek to achieve the happiness and well-being of its subjects.

It would seem that Joseph Smith believed men were, if properly taught, capable of self government but he was, perhaps, realistic enough to observe that ignorant people were probably not capable of achieving democracy. On one occasion when asked how he governed the Church, Joseph replied, "I teach them correct principles and they govern themselves."10 This concept implies that a certain amount of knowledge is necessary for a man to govern himself and enforces the presumption that the Prophet was optimistic about human beings and their capabilities.

If his political teachings are taken as a whole, and man is placed in his eternal perspective, as a god in embryo, then it is justifiable to say that Joseph Smith, like Jefferson, believed that men were able to maintain a democratic government.11

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10B. H. Roberts, The Rise and Fall of Nauvoo (Salt Lake City: Deseret News Publishers, 1900), p. 38. This statement is not found in any of the Prophet's known writings.

11Other works containing information regarding Joseph Smith's concept of men are: Gaylon Loray Caldwell, "Mormon Concept of Individual Rights and Political Obligation" (Ph. D. dissertation, Stanford University, 1952); Keith Melville, "The Political Ideas of Brigham Young" (Ph. D. dissertation, University of Utah, 1956); Rulon S. Wells, "The Nature of Man," Conference Reports, (1938), pp. 68-69. Joseph Smith was optimistic regarding human nature even though a number of scriptural passages can be interpreted as postulating a negative, pessimistic view of mankind. See Mosiah 3:19 and D. & C. 121:39.
Constitutional Theory of Joseph Smith

Many political thinkers have advocated and actively promulgated a belief in God given law. Thomas Aquinas, the great Catholic theologian; Richard Hooker, the British theorist; and Thomas Hooker, a prominent American religionist, for example, all agreed that God was the author of divine law. This belief was part of the main stream of American democratic tradition, even though almost all political scientists advocated a distinction between man made laws and the laws of God. 12

Joseph Smith contended that law comes from God and argued.

Law is beneficial to promote peace and happiness among men. And as before remarked, God is the source from whence proceeds all good; and if man is benefited by law, then certainly law is good; and if law is good, then law, or the principle of it emanated from God; for God is the source of all good; consequently, then, He was the first author of law, or the principle of it, to mankind. 13

In Mormonism, at least one writer has said, there is an extraordinary emphasis upon law.

Not only does Mormonism stress obedience to law as the basis for man's eternal progress towards godhood but it also emphasizes the importance of law in civil affairs. The Mormons believe that 'to the laws all men owe respect and deference,' as without them peace and harmony would be supplanted by anarchy and terror. 14


14 Mark Cannon, p. 31.
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14 Mark Cannon, p. 31.
The major purpose of law, it seems, is to sustain freedom and maintain the rights and privileges of all men. In accordance with this concept, government is good because it is a means of administering law, particularly law insuring human freedom.  

Even though Joseph Smith thought of the state as being a good institution, he argued that government should be limited to the establishment of peace, order, protecting individual property and engaging in affairs that would promote the welfare of the people.

The Jacksonian age was in part notable for the rise of a belief in manifest destiny and in democracy as exhibiting in some fashion the will of God. American institutions were considered in almost an Hegelian sense to reflect the progress of the divine spirit in history. In an analogous sense, the concept of a divine sanction for American institutions which included the Constitution, was very common in the 1830's and 40's.  

Joseph Smith mirroring this common belief, said on occasion that the Constitution of the United States was a glorious standard and was founded on the wisdom of God. He also taught that initially this document had been given by the Almighty to the United States and ultimately the

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15 Ibid., p. 32. This does not mean that Mormons accept natural law in the Catholic sense as being knowable by reason. Rather law, according to Joseph Smith, results from the will of God and is not embedded in the cosmos.

16 Alan P. Grimes (a well-known political theorist) to Kenneth W. Godfrey, March 23, 1965, original in possession of the author.

17 D.H.C., III, pp. 303-305.
principles contained therein would be adopted by all nations of the earth. The ideal end of the Constitution would only be realized in cooperation with the Kingdom of God, whose officers would administer that document after it had been perfected by divine revelation. The Prophet on occasion declared that the "only fault I find with the Constitution is it is not broad enough to cover the whole ground." He meant, it seems, that the Constitution was not always sufficiently broad to protect the weak and oppressed in their just rights. If this weakness is corrected, he said, "I am the greatest advocate of the Constitution in all the world."  

**Duties of the Individual**

The Prophet believed that each individual was a free agent who could best fulfill his obligation to God by actively participating in the

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20 The Kingdom of God refers to the eventual organization of a complete program which will involve the development of both "a Church and a state." On March 11, 1844, Joseph Smith founded a special council often referred to as the Council of Fifty, or legislature of the Kingdom of God. It seems that this council, as envisioned by the Prophet, was to form the nucleus, or legislative branch of what would later become a world government. See Hyrum L. Andrus, *Joseph Smith and World Government* (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book Company, 1958), p. 5.
world. That each person should work with his fellow man in attempting to achieve earthly happiness was also taught by the Mormon leader. The Prophet reflected both the individualism and the communitarian impulse of the age in which he lived. The "Age of Jackson," an era of individualism and liberty, was also a time when many communal groups were founded which attempted to live together in peace and harmony. It is perhaps ironic that an age of individualism can also be described as an era of communitarianism. Still Frederick Jackson Turner argued that the frontier enabled every man, at least potentially, to achieve freedom.\textsuperscript{21} Americans believed that each person was, if not equal, almost as good as another.

According to Mormon political theory the individual man has duties to himself, to other men, to God, and to the state.

Man as the central figure of Mormon thought, is under divine obligation to make an individual contribution to the progress of society . . . accordingly, a Mormon who knows his religion and exercises it, is a very difficult person to control except in terms of appeals made on the basis of his own nature and purpose as he understands them.\textsuperscript{22}

This stress on individualism suggests,

That government will be accepted as best which offers its citizens the maximum opportunity to achieve the optimum personal development. Since rights and duties are conceived prior to, and independent of, the state, it becomes the obligation of the government to recognize


\textsuperscript{22}Durham, \textit{Eth} , p. 114.
these rights and to encourage man in his duties to himself, to other men, and to God. The government cannot perform these duties for him.\textsuperscript{23}

The individual is co-eternal with God and has always had free will. This freedom of will is carried into earth life. However, if man wants to remain free in the fullest sense of the term he must obey the commandments of God, and in so doing will on most occasions adhere to the laws of the state.

According to the 134th section of the Doctrine and Covenants, Mormons are duty bound to support all governments as long as they do not deprive the citizen of life, free exercise of conscience and property. Members of the Church are not required to obey every law regardless of its consequences. If the above conditions are not properly met by government, individuals may revolt with divine justification.

The individual is all important according to Joseph Smith. Government exists for the person and not the person for the government. Every individual, regardless of his station in life, should be important in the eyes of the state.

Separation of Church and State and Religious Liberty

Joseph Smith also advocated the principle of religious liberty in harmony with a popular belief of his age. Roger Williams had been one of the first Americans to advocate religious liberty for all men and the

\textsuperscript{23}Caldwell, p. 232.
separation of church and state. Believing the goals of religious and civil societies were different, Williams argued that it was possible to maintain peace in the secular world without any established religion. \(^{24}\)

These views of Williams were for the most part established and commonly believed by most Americans in the early 19th century.

In Nauvoo, Joseph Smith served as mayor, lieutenant general of the Nauvoo Legion, judge of the municipal court and president of the Church, which supports the argument that he was not overly concerned with the separation of church and state. Of infinitely more importance to the Mormon leader was providing religious freedom for all men. \(^{25}\)

The Prophet was, however, opposed to a church dominating the state or a state dominating a church and seems to have believed like Roger Williams, that their goals were different enough that their role in society should be separate and distinct. The church could make political statements but in general its political activity should be neutral or non-partisan. \(^{26}\)


\(^{25}\) Klaus Hansen, a student of Mormon history, argues that the Prophet held the basic American concept that church and state should be separate because a man might be a member of the Kingdom of God and not belong to the Church. The Church, he contends, was "separate and distinct from the Kingdom of God." Klaus Hansen, "The Council of Fifty in Mormon History" (Master's thesis, Brigham Young University, 1952), p. 42; Klaus Hansen, *Quest For Empire* (East Lansing: Michigan State University Press, 1967).

\(^{26}\) Janosik, p. 57.
While promoting the freedom of religion for all men, Joseph taught that all religion should be left free from restraint of government. Men should be allowed to "worship when, how, and what they may." 27

In Nauvoo, even though Church leaders, for the most part, controlled the municipal government, Joseph Smith helped pass an ordinance allowing all religious bodies the right to practice their beliefs in almost complete freedom. This ordinance specifically included non-Christians as well as the major Christian denominations.

Joseph Smith's Presidential Theory

In 1844 the Prophet was nominated as a candidate for the president of the United States by John Taylor. Joseph Smith's political views were summarized in a pamphlet entitled "Views on the Powers and Policy of the Government of the United States." 28 In this work, the Mormon leader argues that government is for the convenience of the people, not the comfort of the cabinet. Government was to anticipate and be actively engaged in any affairs pertaining to the welfare of the people. He also held that agriculture, manufacturing, navigation and commerce all needed the fostering care of the state. The policy of the government in

27 Pearl of Great Price (Salt Lake City: The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, 1952), p. 60.

28 W. W. Phelps in a letter to Brigham Young, August 6, 1863, claims that he was ordained by the Prophet to write the "Views on the Powers and Policy of the Government of the United States." Even if this is true it is probably safe to assume that the views expressed in that document reflect the thinking of the Prophet. Phelps' letter is found in the ULF.
international affairs should be that of peace. The Prophet advocated prison reform by recommending substituting remedial, corrective measures for the traditional methods of criminal punishment. After purchasing the slaves from their owners, he recommended freeing them, with money obtained from the sale of public land. Regarding slavery he wrote,

Break off the shackles from the poor black man, and hire him to labor like other human beings, for an hour of virtuous liberty on earth is worth a whole eternity of bondage. 29

Like many of his contemporaries the Prophet desired a decentralized, but national, banking system and advocated the annexation of Oregon, Canada, Texas and Mexico. He also contended that the president be given the power to surpress mobs and to intervene, on behalf of civil liberties, in internal affairs. Joseph Smith argued that the president of the United States had the right to protect any citizens whose civil liberties were being infringed upon by either private individuals, local authorities, or state officials.

Unfortunately, the Prophet discovered that his claim on behalf of civil liberty provided insufficient excuse for use of federal power. Nor was there a basis therefore in the federal bill of rights. John Marshall's court had disclosed in Barron vs. Baltimore (1833) that such constitutional guarantees were applicable only as against federal action. 30

According to the Prophet's proposal, a state government could not


delay or prevent such federal action by refusing to petition the president for troops. The precedent for such a concept had previously been established when, in 1794, President George Washington called out the militia of four states to end the Whiskey Rebellion. This procedure was also followed in 1894 when President Grover Cleveland sent troops into Chicago to terminate a Pullman strike over the protests of the governor of Illinois.\(^{31}\) The Republican president, Dwight Eisenhower, and the Democrat, John F. Kennedy, also used troops to enforce public policy in Arkansas and Mississippi respectively. But the last three examples of presidential action came after the adoption of the Fourteenth Amendment, giving the president power to enforce law and order in the states.

Joseph Smith also argued that "the executive power should be available to extend anytime, anywhere, the protections listed in the Bill of Rights."\(^{32}\) He contended that the Constitution should contain a "provision that every officer of the government who should refuse to extend the protection guaranteed in the Constitution should be subject to capital punishment."\(^{33}\)

Espousing another concept held by many Americans, Joseph Smith believed "the nation had a destiny in the world," and particularly in

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\(^{33}\) Joseph Fielding Smith, p. 237.
North America. On this particular point G. Homer Durham has written,

Mormon students should be warned not to take too many liberties with the Mormon idea of the mission of America. Such an idea was the common property of all Americans along the frontier and further east roughly after 1815. However, the Mormon interpretation of the idea, and its support and origin in Mormon doctrine are unique. These things should be stressed; not the originality of the idea.

In a letter to John Windt and others who had solicited the Prophet's views regarding his political platform, Joseph Smith wrote the following explanation.

As soon as the greater national evils could be remedied by the consolidated efforts of a virtuous people, and judicious legislation of wise men, so that slavery could not occupy one half of the United States, for speculation, competition, prodigality, and fleshly capital, and so that enormous salaries, stipends, patronage, and wages of spiritual wickedness in ermine and lace, could not swallow up forty or fifty millions of public revenue, I would use all honorable means to bring the wages of the mechanics and farmers up and the salaries of public servants down; increase labor and money by a judicious tariff, and advise the people, who are the only sovereigns of the soil, to petition Congress to pass a uniform land law that the air, the water and the land of the asylum of the oppressed, might be free to freemen.

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36 Joseph Smith to John Windt and others, found in the George Henry Evans Microfilm Collection of Newman Jeffery, Detroit, Michigan, (n.d.).
Some American Political Ideas Compared with Those of Joseph Smith

Joseph Smith's concept that man, if taught correct principles, was capable of self government, was also proclaimed by John Locke, the great English theorist, whose ideas had such an impact on the Declaration of Independence, as well as Thomas Jefferson and Andrew Jackson. The Prophet's belief that political power springs from the people was earlier expressed by the Scottish humanist, George Buchanan; the English Leveller, John Lilburne; and also by Alexander Hamilton, James Madison and John Jay in the Federalist Papers. In a country often referred to as having a democratic form of government, the Prophet was certainly not expressing a radical view when he said man, with the help of God, could govern himself.

Ideas prevailing in the America of the 1830's and 40's are reflected in the Prophet's views regarding the Constitution. Even his concept that the Constitution should be altered so as to meet the needs of the people was also expressed in somewhat the same way by George Mason, Elbridge Gerry and Thomas Jefferson.

In the ten year period prior to Joseph Smith's death humanitarian impulses were making themselves felt with regard to punishment and


the criminal code. Gradually imprisonment and fines were substituted
for branding, whipping, mutilation, setting in stocks and other forms
of castigation.

In the forties a considerable movement against capital
punishment arose and before it had subsided, most of the
states had limited the crimes punishable by death to
murder, treason, arson and rape. Public executions
were outlawed in two states by 1835. There was also
reformation for governing imprisonment for debt. 39

The Prophet’s political platform reflects this humanitarian impulse.
His argument that prisons should become houses of learning and reha-
bilitation was similarly expressed by other voices in the era 1830 to
1835.

Such men as Henry Clay and John Randolph, sponsors of the
Revolution and American Colonization Society, argued that Negro slaves
should be freed by purchase and returned to Africa. Although this group
had declined in popularity and influence by 1840, it was certainly not a
completely unique nor alien concept for many Americans when the
Prophet advocated almost the same position as Clay and Randolph. His
thinking regarding slavery was temperate and reflected a philosophy of
measured expedience rather than the Hebraic, indignant judgments of
William Lloyd Garrison.

In 1844 the Democratic platform announced that Democrats were
for the admission of Texas and the annexation of Oregon as part of the
United States. James Polk, their presidential candidate, said his

39 Harold Underwood Faulkner, American Political and Social
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program was to "re-establish the independent treasury, lower the tariff, and fulfill the expansionist planks in the Democratic platform."  

It is obvious that Joseph Smith's advocacy of annexing Texas, Oregon and Canada was probably only an expression of a common American concept. The Prophet was also in harmony with the Jacksonian effort to transfer power from a limited aristocracy to a diffuse male population.  

The Prophet's political ideas, it is evident, was not the cause of conflict between Mormons and non-Mormons. Most of his thinking on this subject, with the possible exception of the Kingdom of God ideal, is compatible with the concepts expressed by some of America's major political theorists and practical politicians. When placed in their historical settings many of his ideas do not "border on the absurd" nor do they cause the "sea to heave beyond its bounds." Therefore, it is necessary to study the Prophet's political involvements in order to discover the source of political agitation as it relates to Mormon-Gentile conflict in Illinois.

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40 Idem.

CHAPTER V

POLITICS

Introduction

Having been unable to live harmoniously with their neighbors in Ohio and Missouri, the Mormons were anxious to obtain enough political power in Illinois to protect themselves. Realizing their vote could provide the balance of power, they tended to vote as a unit which caused both Whig and Democratic politicians to actively seek their support. Yet when they voted Whig, the Democrats charged that some corrupt bargaining was behind the Mormon decision to vote against them; and when they voted for the Democrats, the Whigs lamented that some "political deal" had been made between the Mormons and that group. Because the Saints exerted such an influence in local politics animosity soon raised to a fever pitch in Hancock and surrounding counties.

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Politics 1839-1840

Lyman Wight, in 1839, was appointed by the general conference of the Church to present the subject of politics through the public press "in a manner that would alleviate some of the hostile feeling against the Church."\(^3\) Instead of doing so, Wight published a series of letters in the *Quincy Whig* in which he laid the responsibility for the "outrages" perpetrated against the Saints in Missouri upon the Democrats and also implicated not only the Democrats of Missouri but indirectly the national Democratic Party as well. In rebuttal Joseph Smith, Hyrum Smith, and Sidney Rigdon wrote:

> We wish to say to the public through your paper that we disclaim any intention of making a political question of our difficulties with Missouri, believing that we are not justified in so doing.\(^4\)

The Prophet's reaction to Wight's political activity seems to support the view that at least a few members of the Church were aware that political statements could cause feeling against them.

Shortly after his arrival in Illinois, Joseph Smith and other Church leaders began to work with Democratic Senator Richard Young of Illinois

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\(^3\) Wilford Woodruff, "Journal of Wilford Woodruff," located in L. D. S. Church Historian's Library, Salt Lake City, Utah.

\(^4\) Roberts, p. 35.
in asking congress to redress in part the losses the Saints incurred while in Missouri. 5 John T. Stuart supported their petition in the house of representatives, and Henry Clay, the Whig Senator, championed their cause, denouncing the Democrats in the process, hoping, it is supposed, to aid the Whigs in Illinois. 6

The Saints memorial went to the senate judiciary committee which was soon relieved of its responsibility, and no further action was taken. The Mormons were advised to petition the courts of Missouri for further redress. 7

Largely because of the national government's lack of interest in the Saint's petition, a number of periodicals argued that the Mormons would vote in the next election for the Whigs. For example, the Peoria Register and North-Western Gazette reported that "Van Buren's attitude and statement to the Prophet Joseph Smith had turned them [the Saints] almost to the man, against Mr. Van Buren and made them equally as unanimous for Gen. Harrison." 8

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5 Quincy Whig, February 29, 1840.
7 In order to establish Missouri citizenship, a plan was formulated to send a group of Saints to settle in Missouri near the southwest corner of Iowa. See Elias Smith to George A. Smith, July 13, 1840, ULF. Whether or not this was actually done remains uncertain.

8 Peoria Register and North-Western Gazette, June 10, 1840. In describing the Prophet's visit with Van Buren, George W. Smith, a prominent Illinois historian wrote, "After reaching the White House, Smith asked Reynolds to present him to the President as Mr. Smith of Illinois a Latter-day Saint. Governor Reynolds was in a very embarrassing position and tried to show Smith that it was uncalled for, but
In the June conference of 1840, the Prophet delivered an address condemning President Van Buren, and at least one reporter incorrectly estimated that Joseph's sermon would cost the Democrats 100,000 votes. Many observers said it was fairly certain the Mormons who could not vote for Harrison with good feelings would undoubtedly stay home. Forecasters, erroneously estimating the number of Mormon voters in Illinois at 6,000 predicted a Whig victory.

The 1840 election, held in August, was somewhat unique because politics in Hancock County for the first time was conducted on the basis of the candidates being for or against the Mormon Church. For example, Smith insisted. . . . The President smiled at the title, but treated his guest with scant courtesy." According to the Mormon account of the Prophet's visit with President Van Buren, the President was very cordial and friendly but following the Prophet's request for material aid Van Buren said, "Your cause is just but I can do nothing for you." Joseph Smith in commenting on his visit with the President wrote: "During my stay I had an interview with Martin Van Buren, the president, who treated my very insolently, and it was with great reluctance he listended to our message, which, when he had heard he said; 'gentlemen, your cause is just but I can do nothing for you,' and 'if I take up for you I shall lose the vote of Missouri.'" D.H.C., IV, p. 80.

9Iowa News (Des Moines), June 23, 1840.

10There is a great deal of controversy regarding the number of Mormons in the United States in 1840 as well as the number living in Illinois. The religious statistics of the United States for the year 1840 reports that there were only 19,000 Mormons in the United States. For a good discussion of the population problem see B. H. Roberts, Succession in the Presidency of the Mormon Church (Salt Lake City: George Q. Cannon, 1900), pp. 110-111. According to the 1845 Illinois census the population of Nauvoo was 11,052. There were about 1,500 Mormons living around Nauvoo and another 1,500 in Iowa.
in the race for school commissioner,

There were three candidates in the field, two of whom were reportedly well qualified but the third, Dr. George Coulson, had no qualification except the fact that he was a Mormon. But it was pointed out that Dr. Coulson had only recently joined the Mormon Church in order to win the election.\(^{11}\)

Many of the state's major politicians visited Nauvoo in their quest for votes. Dickerson charges that the "flattery and chicanery in which the politicians of the state indulged to win the Mormon vote contributed in a large measure to the rise of a hostile attitude toward the Mormons."\(^{12}\) John Smith, Joseph Smith's uncle, said the public mind was so corrupt that,

There is no knowing who to trust to manage public\(^{[sic]}\) affairs. It does appear to me that our rulers are so corrupt that the Lord will sow vengeance on the nation. I am not clear in my mind to vote for anyone. I am at a loss to know my duty in this thing.\(^{13}\)

On the day of the election Richard M. Young and Stephen A. Douglas were reported visiting Nauvoo in order to induce the Mormons to vote for their party and further to substitute James H. Ralston as elector for Abraham Lincoln. It was later said that because of this appeal, Lincoln ran nearly two hundred votes behind the rest of the ticket in Hancock County.\(^{14}\)

\(^{11}\)Dickerson, p. 24.

\(^{12}\)Ibid., p. 23.

\(^{13}\)John Smith to George A. Smith, April 11, 1840, ULF.

\(^{14}\)Illinois Sentinel, November 21, 1840. An article in the Quincy Whig denied that Young and Douglas were in Nauvoo on the day of the election. Quincy Whig, November 12, 1840.
Election returns indicate the Mormons probably voted for the Whig party on the presidential level; locally they split their vote between Whig and Democratic candidates. It is at least probable that the Mormon vote in Quincy led to the defeat of Orville Browning, the Whig candidate for the House of Representatives. John T. Stuart, a Democrat, was re-elected to Congress, it is supposed, because of the Mormon vote, and non-Mormons charged that Stuart had made a corrupt bargain with the Mormons. In the city of Nauvoo he did receive an extremely large percentage of the vote.

After the election, Mormon publications contained articles which spoke about a "serious vexation that would strike the nation unless its inhabitants repent." Some Mormons feared the country was on the eve of a bloody civil war.

Despite the fact that almost all Mormons voted for the Whig party, at least nationally, the largest commotion in 1840 was raised because they scratched the name of Abraham Lincoln and added that of James H. Ralston. The Quincy Whig demanded an investigation and said Democrats were guilty of playing tricks on the Mormons. Joseph Smith

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16Shipp, p. 41.

17Millennial Star (Liverpool, England), December, 1840.

18Idem.

19Quincy Whig, November 7, 1840.
contended the Mormons had nothing against Lincoln but wanted Ralston to win; and because Lincoln's name was last on the list of electors, it was scratched in order to elect Ralston.  

The Saints, by 1840, were so conscious of their political role that the Times and Seasons reported it would be neutral with regard to politics. However, The Wasp and later the Nauvoo Neighbor, supposedly secular newspapers, published strong political statements. Following the 1840 election, William Harris published a tract in which he accused the Mormons of voting as their leaders dictated. Since many people seem to have believed such statements, the Mormons were often referred to as "dupes and fanatics." 

Politics 1841

In 1841 the state of Illinois was reapportioned according to the census of 1840, resulting in increased Mormon political significance. Emigration had augmented the population of Hancock County until it had grown more than any other region of the state. J. H. Kennedy, in evaluating this period, wrote:

Smith was naturally adept in politics and now that he had control of the votes of at least three thousand men he was

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20 Ibid., November 27, 1840.
21 Ibid., May 23, 1840.
22 William Harris, Mormonism Portrayed (Warsaw: Sharp Gambel, 1841), p. 35.
23 Ford, p. 269.
not slow to turn that power to the Church and to himself. Even in 1840 his influence had reached a point where he could not safely be ignored by the political parties in any event, and certainly not in a close election.\textsuperscript{24}

The Whigs, at least partly to combat growing Mormon political strength, sought to promote a crusade against the Saints. Their newspapers teemed with accounts of the "wonders and enormities of Nauvoo and the awful wickedness of the party that would consent to receive the support of such miscreants."\textsuperscript{25}

Joseph Smith, apparently after reading some of these accounts, issued a proclamation exhorting his followers to unite with the Democratic Party.\textsuperscript{26} Because of the Prophet's advice and because the Mormon vote was thought to be absolute in local and county elections those opposed to the Church agreed that it was necessary to organize a counter force, forming on June 28, 1841, the Anti-Morman Party.\textsuperscript{27} Following its organization, public meetings were held and a ticket nominated that was suitable to both Whigs and anti-Mormon Democrats.\textsuperscript{28} This party was not entirely successful at first but proved to be one of the most


\textsuperscript{25}Ford, p. 269.


\textsuperscript{27}Snyder, p. 16; Gregg, pp. 176-177.

\textsuperscript{28}Gregg, pp. 476-477.
dynamic agencies in creating antagonism against the Saints. 29

On July 7, 1841, the Warsaw Signal reported that Joseph Smith said, "if the anti-Mormons did not stop their blob about him, he would be president of the United States and then show them what a Bonaparte could do." 30 This announcement seems to have convinced the Anti-Mormon Party that Mormonism was essentially a political movement aimed at dominating a vast empire, and they charged that the Mormons "cared nothing about democracy or whiggery but only for the union of church and state." 31 The fact that Joseph Smith simultaneously held important positions in both church and civic government substantiated this charge.

After the successful passage of the Nauvoo Charter the Prophet instructed his friends to support Colonel Adam W. Snyder and John Moore in their quest for political office stating that these two men were "sterling" characters and worthy of any man's vote. 32 Numerous newspapers said the Mormons made a "deal" with Snyder in return for his active support on their behalf. The appointment of General John C. Bennett as Master in Chancery for Hancock County, perhaps part of this "deal," did not meet the approbation of all the citizens. The Warsaw Signal charged that the appointment of Bennett "is frowned on with

29 Snyder, p. 16.
30 Warsaw Signal, July 7, 1841.
31 Dickerson, p. 36.
32 Roberts, p. 121.
indignity by nine-tenths of the substantial citizens of the county." Many politicians said Bennett's appointment came, not only because he was a Mormon, but also because he was a friend of influential Democrats in the state.  

Almost daily the **Warsaw Signal** published articles against the Mormons and their political power. Thomas Sharp, the editor, accused the Mormons of concentrating political power in a religious body or in the hands of a few individuals. On July 23, 1841, the Anti-Mormon Party met and nominated Richard Wilton for school commissioner and Robert Miller for county commissioner which was followed on the same day with this article by Sharp:

> Fellow Citizens:--On Monday next you will be called to decided the question which has for some months past been agitated in your midst. On that occasion we sincerely hope that those of you who wish that this county should be ruled by the free, independent, and thinking citizens, and not by a politico-military church will give your votes to our worthy fellow citizens, Richard Wilton and Robert Miller. If you suffer yourselves to be defeated in this contest, be assured, that you will surrender the county to be governed hereafter by one who has under the garb of religion, defied the laws of man, and desecrated those of heaven--a man whom fortune and impudence alone has elevated from the dregs of the earth, yea! from the staff of a money digger, to the leader of a fanatical band, which now numbers thousands--a man whose history proves him to be a greater knave, a more consummate imposter, and a more impious blasphemer than any

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33 Quincy Whig, May 29, 1841.

34 Ibid., May 15, 1841.

35 Warsaw Signal, May 19, 1841; Quincy Whig, June 26, 1841.
whose acts disgrace the annals of villainy or hypocrisy. 36

On July 29 another anti-Mormon article appeared urging voters to de-
feat those who were in league with the Mormons and win the election for
the Anti-Mormon Party. Large numbers of people must have followed
the advice of the Signal, at least Miller and Wilton were elected to office
in spite of alleged Mormon opposition.

This victory for the Anti-Mormon Party led political analysts to
conclude that the Mormon vote was "not so numerous as many supposed." 37
One writer, after reported the results of the election, said, "it does not
appear that as yet they [the Mormons] are sufficiently numerous to be
courted by either party." 38

Politics 1842

The Prophet issued a statement in the Times and Seasons on New
Year's day urging the Mormons to vote, in August, for A. W. Snyder

36 Idem.

37 Peoria Register and North-Western Gazetteer (Peoria, Illinois),
August 13, 1841; Daily Missouri Republican (St. Louis), August 18, 1841.

38 Sangamo Journal (Illinois), January 4, 1842, in evaluating the
election, published an article in which the editor wrote: "as the Register
seems desirous to misrepresent the facts in relation to the Mormon vote
in Hancock County, we will state--that there were two tickets run for
Mormons and the other by the Anti-Mormons. Wilton, the Anti-Mormon
candidate for Co. Commissioner, received 861 votes--and his opponent,
Bagby, 847. (It is supposed that almost the entire Mormon vote was cast
at Nauvoo, which gave Stuart 448 and Ralston 16). It is not believed that
the vote for County Commissioner exhibits the strength of the Mormon
vote in Hancock--many persons not of the Mormon faith having voted for
Bagby; but on this point we have no certain knowledge."

and John Moore for governor and lieutenant governor, respectively. On January 21, 1842, the Peoria Register and North-Western Gazetteer re-published a comment by the Prophet praising the Democrats Snyder, Moore and Douglas. The editor argued in the same article that he did not believe the Mormon prophet could influence all of his followers. He said Joseph Smith probably controlled the vote in Nauvoo but not the votes of Mormons living in other parts of the state. 39

Many newspapers reported that Joseph Smith's direct endorsement of the Democratic Party would only serve to widen the breach between Mormons and Gentiles causing the Prophet to publish the following statement:

We care not a fig for a Whig or Democrat: They are both alike to us; but we shall go for our friends, our tried friends and the cause of human liberty, which is the cause of God. 40

The Prophet continued by declaring that he would vote for Snyder and Douglas because they were friends of the Mormon people and not because they were Democrats. W. G. Goforth, an ardent supporter of Snyder, in an attempt to secure the Mormon vote wrote;

I have the honor to acknowledge the receipt of your letter dated January 15, 1842. Your sentiments, in regard to the selection and choice of men in the administrative department of our state so correspond with my views that comment is unnecessary. I have been intimate with Adam W. Snyder since 1830. . . . I am one that can say in truth that if Illinois elects him to the

39Sangamo Journal, August 20, 1841.

40Quincy Whig, January 22, 1842.
... gubernational department we can say that a selection in our cause has not been excelled in the west. . . . and sir, permit me to add, that I witness many of the efforts of our friend Snyder, when in the Senate chamber of Illinois--not only for the Mormons but for every class whose reliance were fixed for the [word unclear] of a legislative operation. 41

Since the Whigs were alligned with the Anti-Mormon Party in attempting to wrest political control from the Mormons, it was only natural that the Saints would feel an affinity for the Democrats.

On May 26, 1842, Joseph Smith reiterated that he did not intend to vote the Whig or Democratic tickets as such but would cast his ballot for those men who would support good order and government. 42 The anti-Mormons, however, replied to this statement by arguing that it was strange that all of those who would support good order and government wore the Democratic label.

In the latter part of May, Sidney Rigdon and Orson Pratt were nominated for the state house of representatives, Hiram Kimball was nominated for county commissioner, George Miller for the state senate, and J. B. Backenstos for sheriff. These men were all Mormons, or, as was the case with Backenstos, friendly to the Mormon people. 43 Joseph Smith acted as chairman and concurred in all of its proceedings

41 W. G. Goforth to Rev. George P. Dykes, February 7, 1842. ULF.


43 The Wasp, May 26, 1842.
except the nomination of Backenstos. The Whig Party, partly to off-
set the growing tendency of Mormons to vote for Democratic candidates,
nominated a Mormon for the house of representatives.

Following the death of Snyder, Thomas Ford was selected as the
Democratic candidate for governor. He was accused by the newspapers
of making a "deal" with the Mormons in order to secure their support.
"They gave him power and he is to give them votes" cried the State
Register. William Smith published an editorial denying that any such
agreement had been made. The only reason the Whigs were "shouting"
was because Joe Duncan, Fords opponent, had sought Mormon endorse-
ment and been refused, the Quincy Herald charged. It was generally
known that the Prophet was Duncan's real estate representative in Nauvoo.
He gave Joseph Smith "a nice financial reward for so doing," hoping, it
was said, "to win the Mormon vote."  

44 This statement is very interesting because in 1843 Joseph Smith
wrote a letter to a B. Thomas in which he said: "Friends of Col
Backenstos have suggested the propriety of getting up a petition to sus-
tain him in the office of circuit clerk in this part of the county. Con-
fided in saying to you that it is only spending time for nothing. We
have according to the poll books about 1,300 votes. Nearly all of
which will sign for Col. J. B. Backenstos for clerk. And if you desire
the names of 1,200 shall be forthcoming." ULF.

45 Sangamo Journal, June 10, 1842.

46 Quoted in The Wasp, June 18, 1842.

47 Quincy Herald, June 30, 1842.

48 Shipp, p. 67.
In the summer of 1842 John C. Bennett, in public speeches, made serious allegations relative to Joseph Smith and the Mormons. Some have asserted that Bennett's "disclosures" had an impact on Duncan. At least following Bennett's charges Duncan began to deliver anti-Mormon speeches, which, it is believed, lost him the Mormon vote. 49

On July 9, 1842, Joseph Smith announced that he would endorse only those candidates who came out in open opposition to the Anti-Mormon Party. 50 The Prophet also declared that the Mormons were not involved in politics and were the only people in the country who supported the Constitution.

On July 22, 1842, a Mr. Hopkins withdrew from the race in favor of Dr. John F. Charles because Mormons had indicated they would not support him. The following letter written by John Harper further substantiates the importance of the Mormon vote.

My friends say, they want me to go through the [word unclear] as I have been before the people and my sentiments made known and have never been turned about by the anti-Mormon party. My friends think that they can unite more votes on me amongst the old citizens, than any other of the candidates could get, if you think that I could get support among your people to insure my election to the house of representatives at our next legislature. I will say to you, that your interests will be promptly attended to, as they would by anyone in the county. For I shall never be found ungrateful with respect to my political friends. For I verily believe that you and all of your people are true patriots. 51

49 Idem.
50 Warsaw Signal, July 9, 1842.
51 John Harper to General Joseph Smith, July 13, 1842, ULF.
Harper in another letter to the Prophet denies that he was connected with the anti-Mormon meeting in Carthage.\textsuperscript{52}

As the date of the election drew near, the newspapers carried many articles identifying Joseph Smith and the Mormons with the Democratic Party and its candidates.\textsuperscript{53} Some even went so far as to speculate that the entire Mormon vote would be cast for Judge Ford and John Moore.\textsuperscript{54} When the votes were counted Ford received 1,037 in Nauvoo to Duncan's six.

In a letter to William Smith, dated August 27, 1842, Stephen A. Douglas said he was pleased with the election in Illinois, particularly in Hancock County, and lashed out against the demagogues, probably Whigs, who would elevate themselves by persecuting any religion or political party. In the next election, he said, he would unite with the Church to see that its candidates were elected.\textsuperscript{55}

The great display of Mormon political activity in the 1842 election caused the reorganization of the Anti-Mormon Party which had previously collapsed.\textsuperscript{56} The first public meeting after the reorganization was held September 7, 1842, at which time a central committee was

\footnotesize{\textsuperscript{52}This second letter is also found in the ULF in the same envelope as the first. No date is found on the second letter.}

\footnotesize{\textsuperscript{53}Peoria Register and North-Western Gazetteer, July 22, 1842; Quincy Herald, July 28, 1842; Sangamo Journal, July 29, 1842; Quincy Herald, August 4, 1842.}

\footnotesize{\textsuperscript{54}Quincy Herald, August 4, 1842.}

\footnotesize{\textsuperscript{55}Stephen A. Douglas to William Smith, August 27, 1842, ULF.}

\footnotesize{\textsuperscript{56}Smith, History of Illinois, p. 279.
appointed to take steps toward a permanent organization. Partly to offset the influence of this party Joseph Smith sent Wilford Woodruff to Keokuk to publish a political paper that would present the Mormon point of view and quell much of the unfavorable publicity which had resulted from the 1842 election. The Whig's continued to attack the Mormons as did the Anti-Mormon Party and many unfavorable articles continued to appear about the Church.

Politics 1843

The 1843 election seemed to have revolved, at least locally, around attempts to extradite Joseph Smith to Missouri. Edward Little, the Mormon representative from Hancock County died in July and J. P. Hodge and Cyrus Walker campaigned for his seat in the legislature. Before agreeing to defend the Prophet in court, Walker exacted a promise of his support in the coming election. By this action, Walker was apparently certain that the rest of the Saints would follow their leader. However, shortly before the election, Hyrum Smith said he had received a revelation that the Saints should vote for Hodge.

Election results

57 Gregg, p. 299

58 Illinois Republican (Springfield), August 20, 1842; Quincy Whig, August 27, 1842, September 3, 1842; Reta Halford, "Nauvoo--The City Beautiful" (Master's thesis, University of Utah, 1945), p. 273; Sorensen, pp. 128-129; and Gregg, p. 276.


60 D.H.C., V, p. 526.
indicate Hodge received 629 votes in Nauvoo to Walker's seventy-one. \textsuperscript{61} Newspapers charged the Saints with meddling in politics and were very bitter in their denunciation of the entire affair. \textsuperscript{62}

Joseph Smith's political power was considered to be so great that James Arlington Bennett wrote, "I expect to be yet, through your influence, governor of the state of Illinois." \textsuperscript{63} This letter is especially unique because Bennett was not at this time a citizen of the state. Yet behind the Prophet's great power there were forces at work that would eventually destroy the Mormon leader. Ford says that "from this time on [1843] the Whigs generally and a part of the Democrats determined upon driving the Mormons from the state." \textsuperscript{64}

Politics 1844

In order to determine the attitude of the most likely presidential candidates for the campaign of 1844, Joseph Smith wrote letters to Martin Van Buren, Henry Clay, John C. Calhoun, Lewis Cass and Richard Johnson. \textsuperscript{65} In each of these letters he asked what action would be taken relative to the large amount of property the Saints had lost in

\begin{itemize}
  \item \textsuperscript{61}Bloomington Herald (Bloomington, Illinois), August 4, 1843; Davenport Gazette (Davenport, Iowa), August 10, 1843.
  \item \textsuperscript{62}Davenport Gazette, August 10, 1843.
  \item \textsuperscript{63}James Arlington Bennett to Joseph Smith, March 23, 1843, ULF.
  \item \textsuperscript{64}Ford, p. 319.
  \item \textsuperscript{65}The Nauvoo Neighbor (Nauvoo, Illinois), November 8, 1843.
\end{itemize}
Missouri. Replies were received from Calhoun, Clay and Cass, but for the most part they were unsatisfactory to the members of the Church. Joseph Smith wrote replies to each of those who answered his letter, which were published in several newspapers. The content of the Prophet's reply made it clear that none of the candidates could expect the Mormon vote.  

Before the letters were sent, the Prophet had evidently concluded to run for the presidency of the United States. Wilford Woodruff maintained that as early as December, 1843, Joseph Smith decided to become a presidential candidate.  

In January, 1844, it was rumored that the Mormons had concluded a treaty with President Santa Anna of Mexico for the purchase of Texas, had given the state of Illinois as security, and agreed to assume ten million of the Mexican debt to England. The report further stated that commissioners had already been appointed to run the boundary line and President Sam Houston was to be transported by Santa Anna to the Fiji Islands. Although the Mormons were exploring the possibility of settling elsewhere and Texas was one of the places mentioned, there seems to be no evidence that would support this rumor.  

Joseph Smith announced on January 31, 1844, that he was a candidate for the presidency. In defense of his action, the Mormon leader

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66 Lewis Cass's reply dated December 9, 1843, ULF.


68 Lee County Democrat (Lee County, Iowa), January 20, 1844.
said the Saints had been persecuted and "their rights trampled on and no officer of the government had offered to help them."\(^{69}\)

After the Prophet had publicly declared his candidacy there was general rejoicing in Nauvoo. Bonfires were lighted, the band played and the Prophet was lifted upon shoulders and carried "about with shouts for General Smith."\(^{70}\) The general public was not as enthused about his candidacy as were the populace of Nauvoo. In fact Willis G. Swartz concluded that it was the "bold announcement for the presidency" that led to renewed persecution at the hands of "surrounding Gentiles."\(^{71}\)

By February 8, 1844, the Prophet with the help of W. W. Phelps, a Mormon journalist, and John M. Bernheisal, a physician, prepared his

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\(^{69}\)James Arlington Bennett (he often spelled his name with only one "t") was asked by Church leaders to become their candidate for the vice presidency. Several Mormon historians claim Bennett was not a citizen of the United States and hence was not eligible for the office. In a letter to Willard Richards, Bennett states that he did not want to run for office. "With a view to take out a copy-right in England, I made two attempts to prove myself a British subject, before the British consul in New York, but was completely unsuccessful in both.

My parents emigrated to America and landed in New York from the Ship Rover on the 10th of June, 1788. This fact is on the custom house books. There are reasons why I wished to have it thought I was born abroad. Who regarded the book of an American native author twenty years ago?" James Arlington Bennett to Willard Richards, April 14, 1844, ULF. Bennett refused the nomination as did Copeland of Tennessee. Finally Sidney Rigdon was asked to run, accepted and was nominated.


platform, which was published in pamphlet form. 72

On February 21 the Anti-Mormon Party held a meeting in Warsaw
where a resolution was passed that they would drive the Mormons from
Hancock County. 73 A similar meeting was called in Carthage for the
purpose of "organizing opposition to the encroachments and usurpations
of Joe Smith." 74 Both of these meetings passed resolutions condemning
"unlawful Mormon political activities." Peter Cartwright reported that
Joseph Smith had said,

I will show you, sir, that I will raise up a government
in these United States which will overturn the present
government, and I will raise up a new religion that will
overturn every other form of religion in the country. 75

Davidson states that Joseph Smith had himself annointed King and
Priest and that he administered "to his followers the oath of allegiance." 76
Some people thought this was just a typical anti-Mormon statement with
little foundation in fact. Yet the Niles' National Register published an
article in which the writer argued that Joseph Smith was like a sovereign
in Nauvoo and that he conducted himself like a king. This, the author
said, was a contributing cause of his death. 77

72 Lee County Democrat, February 8, 1844.
73 Nauvoo Neighbor, February 21, 1844.
74 Niles' National Register, March 2, 1844.
76 Davidson, p. 501.
77 Niles' National Register, July 13, 1844.
On March 11, 1844, Joseph Smith organized what has been called the "Council of Fifty."\textsuperscript{78} According to at least one report, 

We [the members of the council] ordained Joseph Smith as King on earth, and in order to install him as one earthly king it was agreed upon that we would run Joseph Smith for President of the United States... and in case they were elected we would at once establish dominion in the United States, and in view of failure we would send a minister to the then republic of Texas to make a treaty with the cabinet of Texas for all that country north of a west line from the falls the Colorado River to the Nueces.\textsuperscript{79}

William Marks stated, "I was also witness to the introduction of a kingly form of government, in which Joseph suffered himself to be ordained King to reign over the house of Israel forever."\textsuperscript{80} Lyman Wight in a letter to Joseph Smith dated June 19, 1844, said "You are already president pro-tem of the World."\textsuperscript{81} George T. Davis wrote,

He [Joseph Smith] was able to secure his coronation as king, in this land of liberty and equal rights, whose citizens acknowledge no other king than He, whose hands are the direction of all nations. Neither can it be denied... that no matter what the requisition made of them [his followers] if done under his kingly authority must be obeyed.\textsuperscript{82}


\textsuperscript{79} George Miller, June, 1855, located in the Library of Congress, copied by Hyrum L. Andrus, Professor of Religion, Brigham Young University, a copy of this letter is in the possession of the writer.

\textsuperscript{80} Zion's Harbinger and Baneemy's Organ, III (July, 1853), p. 52.

\textsuperscript{81} Lyman Wight to Joseph Smith, June 19, 1844, ULF.

\textsuperscript{82} George T. M. Davis, An Authentic Account of the Massacre of Joseph Smith (St. Louis: Chambers & Knapp, 1844), pp. 7-8.
He also says the Prophet was crowned by the Council of Fifty over the "immediate house of Israel." It was reported by Daniel Jones that Wilson Law heard Joseph Smith "preaching from Daniel, 2nd chapter, 44th verse, that the kingdom referred to was already set up and that he [Joseph] was king over it."\textsuperscript{83} And finally in a revelation dated 1886 given to President John Taylor, mention is made of Joseph Smith being crowned a king in Nauvoo.\textsuperscript{84} Not only was he ordained a king but the leading members of the Church were assigned governmental responsibilities. Brigham Young was to be president, John Taylor vice president, members of the Church were assigned to represent different states in the house and senate of the United States, and a full cabinet was appointed.\textsuperscript{85}

The Nauvoo Expositor seemed to allude to this when the editor wrote;

Another party, however, has sprung up in our midst, the leaders of which, it would seem, expects by a flourish of Quixote chivalry, to take, by storm the Presidential Chair, and distribute among his faithful supporters the office of Governor in all the different states, for the purpose we presume, of more effectively consolidating the government.\textsuperscript{86}

The general public probably misunderstood the Prophet and his role in relation to the Council of Fifty. He was accused by some of engaging in treasonable activities which seems inconsistent with his public

\textsuperscript{83}D.H.C., V, p. 569.

\textsuperscript{84}John Taylor papers in the L.D.S. Church Historian's Library.

\textsuperscript{85}Document dated February 6, 1844, ULF. This document is not signed but lists all of the various officers and officials in this new government.

\textsuperscript{86}The Nauvoo Expositor, June 7, 1844.
statements regarding the United States Constitution. It appears evident that his concept of the Kingdom of God was an ideal, a utopia, a goal to be worked for and achieved sometime in the future. The Prophet was not going to establish The Kingdom of God by the sword but with love and gentle persuasion. 87 He apparently hoped to change men's lives by teaching them "pure religion and virtue" so that they would be ready for the millennial reign of Christ.

If the political kingdom of God is placed in its utopian framework it is perhaps more understandable. However, many people seem to have thought the Prophet was going to attempt to establish a secular kingdom by using force and violence. This, of course, aroused some anxiety especially in view of the increasing strength of the Nauvoo Legion. In reality there was little reason for the general populace to be overly concerned regarding the Prophet's political activities in this regard.

As early as March 3, 1844, a Mr. Thompson told a group of Mormon missionaries that he would not mind shooting "Joe Smith and said if there was any chance of him being elected that there was a man not far off that would shoot him." 88 Thompson went on to exclaim that "there was no chance of him taking his seat in Washington." 89 About the same

87 Joseph Smith to James Arlington Bennett, March 17, 1842, original in the Historical Society of Pennsylvania, a copy is also in the L.D.S. Church Historian's Library.

88 James Burgess, "Diary of James Burgess," March 3, 1844, located in the L.D.S. Church Historian's Library.

89 Idem.
time a meeting was held in Carthage by a group of political leaders in
which they plotted and planned the assassination of the Prophet should
he become a real political threat in terms of the United States presidency.

Joseph Smith's candidacy, it was stated in an April political meeting,
"would bring from two to five thousand voters, into the field."\(^9\) This
seems to be primarily propaganda, yet it is possible that such state-
ments helped bring about the murder of the Mormon Prophet.

By April 25, 1844, a list of elders was published in the *Nauvoo
Neighbor* together with their assignment in promoting the candidacy of
Joseph Smith.\(^9\) Wilford Woodruff, Jedediah M. Grant and George A.
Smith started, on May 9, 1844, from Nauvoo in a lumber wagon on a
political mission to the east. Elder Smith wrote,

> Our mission is to visit the Eastern States and hold large
> meetings in every place we can. Preach the Gospel and
electioneer for General Smith who is a candidate for the
> office of the President of the United States.\(^9\)

It was decided in a May convention held in Nauvoo to secure the
appointment of delegates from several states to a national convention
that would be held at Baltimore, Maryland.\(^9\) The joy of the Saints
was so great on this occasion that Joseph Smith was given a formal
ovation, lifted upon their shoulders and carried through the streets.

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\(^9\)*Nauvoo Neighbor*, April 25, 1844.

\(^9\)*Warsaw Signal*, April 25, 1844.

\(^9\)*George A. Smith, "Journal of George A. Smith," May 9, 1844, located in the L.D.S. Church Historian's Library.*

\(^9\)*Bloomington Herald*, May 10, 1844.
With the campaign initiated, it seems that some Mormons, forgetting their unpopularity for a moment, actually thought the Prophet could be elected.

James Arlington Bennett was perhaps more realistic in his appraisal of the situation. In a letter to Willard Richards he wrote,

If you can by any supernatural means select Brother Joseph President of these U. States, I have not a doubt but that he would govern the people and administer the laws in good faith, and with righteousness intentions, but I can see no natural means by which he has the slightest chance of receiving the votes even of one state.

... you seemed to forget my dear Doetor, that every man's hand is against the Mormons, and the Mormons against every man in a religious sense. 94

On May 17, 1844, George A. Smith and members of his group addressed five hundred people at Ottowa, Illinois. He reported that "the people applauded my sentiments very highly and seemed much pleased." 95 The meeting dispersed without the least sign of unfriendly feeling. However, a meeting held on May 20, 1844, by the same men broke up in confusion. 96

In New York City only seventy people attended a Mormon political rally and most of these left before it was officially over. 97 The elders reported that there was little interest in the Prophet's candidacy in the

94James Arlington Bennett to Willard Richards, April 14, 1844, ULF.


96Ibid., May 20, 1844.

97Ibid., May 31, 1844.
nation's largest city.

In Boston, Heber C. Kimball said that "Brigham Young was speaking before a full house in Meladon Hall, when at half past nine, confusion broke out and a mob hert [sic] a policeman, very bad." Elder Kimball reported in closing, "all confusion, but much good was done."\(^98\)

James Flanagan stated;

I preached at Turkeytown at Br. Mahoney's I tuched [sic] on justice, government and corrupt rulers which inraged [sic] some of the people to such pich [sic] that they talked of mobbing me. The truth is I spoke the facts; and truth makes [word unclear] to people mad!\(^99\)

While these meetings were being held in all parts of the United States, William Law and other disaffected Mormons attended gatherings in Carthage in which the major topic was how to deal with Joseph Smith. According to a Dr. Southwick the purpose of the meeting was to,

take into consideration the best way to stop Joseph Smith's career, as his views on government were widely circulated and took like wildfire. They said if he did not get into the Presidential chair this election, he would be sure to the next time; and if Illinois and Missouri would join together and kill him they would not be brought to justice for it. There were delegates in the meeting from every state in the Union except three.\(^100\)

Meanwhile, D. J. Hollister was in Baltimore to secure accommodation for the Mormon national convention that was to be held there in July.\(^101\)

\(^{98}\) Heber C. Kimball, "Journal of Heber C. Kimball," July 1, 1844, located in the L.D.S. Church Historian's Library.


\(^{100}\) D.H.C., VI, pp. 605-606.

\(^{101}\) D. J. Hollister to Joseph Smith, June 26, 1844, ULF.
After Joseph Smith was killed by a "mob" on June 27, 1844, Mormon political activity abated. Brigham Young, apparently believing that politics was at least partly responsible for the death of the Prophet, advised the Saints to remain aloof from partisan activity. However, Willard Richards told George Miller to introduce a bill before the Mexican and Texas governments that would give the Saints a self-governing territory between the two countries. 102

Politicians continued to seek Church support. Samuel Jones, on July 10, 1844, wrote to Willard Richards in an attempt to secure the Mormon vote. 103 Jones told Richards what a fine man he was and how much the Mormon vote was needed. Thomas Coates, another politician, upon discovering that Jones had written to Brother Richards, told Richards that he should not have pledged his support to Jones. Coates argued that Elder Richards was violating the doctrine of the separation of church and state. In reply to Coates, Richards said that he did not give Jones any assurance that he would support him but on the contrary Mormons voted as they pleased and were not dictated to by the leaders of the Church. 104

Joseph M. Cole reported that the Anti-Mormon Party was going to intercept the Nauvoo election returns, destroy them and make certain

102 Willard Richards to George Miller, not dated, ULF.
103 Samuel Jones to Willard Richards, July 10, 1844, ULF.
104 Willard Richards to Thomas Coates, July, 1844, ULF.
the Mormon vote would not defeat their candidates. 105 David Rogers blamed the Democratic Party for the murder of Joseph Smith and urged Brigham Young to do all he could to see that the opposite party gained power in the 1844 election. 106

The Anti-Mormon Party won the 1844 election in Hancock County. The Mormons began to make preparation to leave Illinois and by February, 1846, they were migrating west.

Summary

When the Saints arrived in Quincy it was the Democratic Association that welcomed them. The two political parties in Illinois were so evenly divided that the Mormons represented the balance of power. Both groups sought their ballots. Largely because they generally voted as a unit their strength was potentially even more important. The Mormons seem to have been pleased with their power and sought the plaudets of the state's politicians. They found they could please neither party completely and problems developed that became as serious as those in Missouri.

The Whigs were among the first to actively oppose the Saints when they failed to receive their vote. Soon they formed an alliance with the newly-organized Anti-Mormon Party and resolved to crush the political strength of Joseph Smith. Probably because the Mormons were numerically stronger than any other group in Hancock County, the Anti-Mormon

105 Joseph M. Cole to Willard Richards, August 5, 1844, ULF.
106 David Rogers to Brigham Young, August, 1844, ULF.
Party disbanded for a time only to be reorganized. This party was partly responsible for driving the Mormons from the state in 1846.

Meanwhile, Joseph Smith sought for and used political power in Illinois. He wanted to avoid the Missouri persecutions and felt that politics, if used adroitly, would prevent a re-enactment of the Missouri experience. That he failed in his endeavor to secure peace is attested to by the fact that he suffered death at the hands of a "mob" and his followers were driven from the state.
CHAPTER VI

MASONRY INNAUVOO

Introduction

After Joseph Smith became a Mason he introduced a ceremony into the Church called the endowment. Largely because of similarities in this ordinance and Masonic practices the Mormons were accused of imitating Masonic rites. The Prophet said the endowment was older than Masonry and had been revealed anew through him. Both groups accused the other of misrepresenting the true origin of their rituals.

The Prophet's initiation into and activities within the Masonic Order were partly responsible for some of the persecution on the part of Gentiles in Hancock County. Joseph Smith's association with the Mormon temple ceremony caused a few Masons to join the Anti-Mormon Party and actively conspire against him.

Masonry in the Church Before 1839

Joseph Smith lived in a state where many people persecuted Masons, at a time when there was much talk about them, and he was probably familiar by 1830 with the organization and rites of this society. This led S. H. Goodwin to conclude:

The first contact of Mormonism with Masonry antedated the Nauvoo period by somewhat more than fifteen
years. In fact the present writer is convinced that the years which saw the preparation and publication of the Golden Bible of this new faith also witnessed the very material prenatal influence of Masonry upon Mormonism, proof of which lies thickly sprinkled over the pages of the Book of Mormon.¹

Other writers have concluded that references to secret societies in the Book of Mormon were a result of Masonic disclosures in New York during the late 1820's, such as the reference to Master Mahan, which was construed to be a corruption of Master Mason.²

William W. Phelps, an early Mormon convert who served a term in prison because of opposition to the Masons, was the editor of two anti-Masonic newspapers—one in Trumansburg, New York, called the Lake Light and another in Canandigua, New York, named the Ontario Phoenix.³ The avowed purpose of the latter "was to give the people more light regarding Masonry."⁴

The Prophet's brother, Hyrum, became a Mason at Victor, New York, in 1827 and Heber C. Kimball, an early Mormon apostle, joined

¹S. H. Goodwin, Mormonism and Masonry: A Utah Point of View (Salt Lake City: Grand Lodge F. & A. M., 1925), p. 38.


⁴Ontario Phoenix (Ontario, New York), May 4, 1831.
the Freemasons as early as 1823. He, like Hyrum after him, received
the first three degrees of Masonry at Victor. Elder Kimball claimed
he was driven from his home by mobs five times because of his Masonic
associations. 5 Helen, his daughter, reports, "I remember once, when
but a young girl, of getting a glimpse of the outside of the Morgan book
exposing Masonry but which my father always kept locked up."6

Some of the other members of the Church who belonged to the
Masons include Newel K. Whitney, John C. Bennett, George Miller,
Lucius N. Scovil, Elijah Fordham, John Smith, Austin Cowles, Noah
Rogers and James Adams. 7 Some writers claim Brigham Young was
a member of the Milnor Lodge in New York. 8

5 Orson F. Whitney, Life of Heber C. Kimball (Salt Lake City:
Stevens & Wallis Inc., 1945), pp. 11-12.

6 Morgan here refers to William Morgan who was allegedly ab-
ducted in Batavia, New York in 1826 after publishing a book in which
he revealed the entire Masonic ritual. The story first broke in the
Wayne Sentinel, October 13, 1826, and almost every issue thereafter
for several years devoted some space to the subject of Masonry. James
C. Bilderback, "Masonry and Mormonism in Nauvoo, 1841-1847"
(Master's thesis, State University of Iowa, 1957), says there is still
some question as to whether or not Morgan was actually murdered
by the Masons. Morgan's widow married G. W. Harris while he
[Harris] lived in the Prophet's home. She later became a plural
wife of Joseph Smith. See Benjamin F. Johnson, My Life's Review
(Missouri: Zion's Printing and Publishing Company, 1947), p. 61;
Lee County Democrat, October 1, 1842; Helen Mar Whitney, "Scenes

7 Handwritten copy of proceedings of a Masonic meeting, dated
1844, by Henry Sherwood, ULF.

8 William R. Denslow, "10,000 Famous Freemasons," Missouri
Lodge of Research, VI (1956), p. 34.
The number of Masons in the Church, together with Joseph Smith's close association with Phelps, would probably have led to some discussion of Masonic procedures. The Prophet and other Mormons were undoubtedly acquainted with some aspects of Masonic ritual before settling in Illinois. However, Mormon Masonic activities in Nauvoo caused, for the first time, some of the persecution the Saints had to endure.

**Masonry in Nauvoo**

The first Masonic lodge in Illinois, located at Kaskaskia, was founded in 1805, and its first meeting was held in December of that same year. The charter of this lodge was not granted until June 2, 1806, but by June 24 it had eighty-four members.

In December, 1822, delegates from the Masonic lodges met and elected Governor Shadrich Bond as their grand master. Because of anti-Masonic feeling in 1828 the lodge became dormant for a time. After 1832 and the disintegration of the Anti-Masonic Party, Masonry gradually made a comeback, but because of a negative attitude among people in general it was a slow process. By 1835 feeling had subsided

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9 B. H. Roberts, a noted L.D.S. Historian, argues that because the contents of the books of Abraham and Moses were revealed before Joseph Smith became a Mason there is no connection between the endowment and Masonic ritual. It appears that Roberts' argument is weak because Joseph Smith could have been familiar with Masonic rites before the contents of these two books were revealed to him.

to some extent and a second grand lodge was petitioned for in Quincy whose charter was granted on April 6, 1840. Abraham Jonas, a prominent Illinois Jewish politician, was elected grand master of the second lodge. In 1840 the total Masonic membership in Illinois and the United States was 157 and 2,072, respectively.

In the early summer of 1841, following considerable urging by Judge James Adams, a number of Mormon Masons petitioned Bodley Lodge at Quincy for its consent and approval to establish a lodge at Nauvoo. This petition was apparently signed by all the known Masons in the Church. It was refused on the ground that these persons were unknown to the Quincy lodge as Masons, but on October 15, 1841, a recess dispensation was granted by the newly elected grand master Jonas to George Miller, John D. Parker and L. N. Scovil. The Masons in Nauvoo almost immediately began to hold meetings. These gatherings were conducted early in the morning and according to the minutes, kept by secretary John C. Bennett, the dues were fifty cents with another twenty-five cents added for lateness.

Jonas was running for political office when he granted the dispensation and perhaps thought his act would procure for himself the

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11 Dr. James J. Tyler, John Cook Bennett (n.p., n.d.). This is a pamphlet reprinted from the proceedings of the Grand Lodge of Ohio and a copy is found in the Utah Historical Society Library, Salt Lake City, Utah.

12 Bennett's last minutes were dated May 6, 1842, this was the day before the "mock battle" took place in which Joseph Smith perceived that Bennett sought to take his life. D.H.C., V.
Mormon vote. However, there was nothing irregular in his act. Grand Master Jonas published an account of the installation of the Nauvoo Lodge in his paper, the *Columbia Advocate*.

While at Nauvoo I had a fine opportunity of seeing the people in a body. There was a Masonic celebration, and the grand master of the state was present for the purpose of publically installing the officers of a new lodge. An immense number of persons assembled on the occasion, variously admitted from five to ten thousand persons, and never in my life did I witness a better-dressed or more orderly and well-behaved group, and the display of taste and beauty among the females could not well be surpassed anywhere.\(^{13}\)

Regarding the same event, Joseph Smith wrote;

I officiated as grand chaplain at the installation of the Nauvoo lodge of Freemasons at the grove near the temple. Grand Master Jonas of Columbus being present, a large number of people assembled on the occasion. The day was exceeding fine: all things were done in order, and universal satisfaction was manifested. In the evening I received the first degree in Freemasonry in the Nauvoo lodge, assembled in my general business office.\(^{14}\)

Only a few Mormons were opposed to Masonry. As has been previously mentioned, W. W. Phelps was one; another was Ebenezer Robinson, who wrote, "theretofore the Church has strenuously opposed secret societies . . . but after John C. Bennett came into the Church a great change in sentiment seemed to take place."\(^{15}\) In spite of some

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\(^{13}\) Quoted in Cole, p. 192


\(^{15}\) Ebenezer Robinson, "Items of Personal History of the Editor," *The Return*, I-III (1888-1890), p. 90. This statement is also quoted in Flanders, p. 242. Robinson was at least partially incorrect when he made the above statement. A number of Mormons were Masons before John C. Bennett came into the Church.
opposition the new lodge was very active because, according to Cole, the people were influenced by the example of their leaders. Within five months the Nauvoo Lodge initiated 256 candidates and raised 243 more, which was six times as many initiations and elevations as all of the other lodges in the state combined. This seems to have aroused jealousy among the other lodges and rumors circulated that Mormons were becoming Masons so as to completely dominate the Masonic organization of the state.

It was also rumored that Mormon women were being admitted to the organization. It would seem that people confused Masonic ritual with that of the temple endowment because about seven weeks after joining the Masonic lodge the Prophet began to give instructions regarding the ancient order of keys, washings, anointings and endowments. About 5,669 Mormons, both men and women, received their endowments before the Saints left Nauvoo. However, there seems to be no evidence that women were initiated into the Masonic order.

The officers of the Nauvoo Lodge were George Miller, Hyrum Smith, Lucius Scovil, William Clayton, Newel K. Whitney, Charles Allen, Heber C. Kimball, William Felshaw, Hyrum Clark, Samuel Ralfe, Asahel Perry, Daniel S. Miles and Hezekiah Peck. Under the leadership of these men the Mormons recruited, in the space of five

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16 *D.H.C.*, VII, p. XXV. George B. Arbaugh states that 12,000 Mormons received their endowments before the Saints left Nauvoo. He is obviously incorrect in his assertion. There were only about 14,000 Mormons in the entire Illinois region and this figure includes children. Brigham H. Roberts' figures seems more in accordance with population figures.
months, about five Masons a day. Joseph E. Morcombe says the Saints were "finding in the plan of the lodge something which could be bent to their own uses . . . and at once overstepped the bounds of prudence." 17 On August 6, 1842, a Mormon Masonic lodge was initiated in Montrose, Iowa, and soon Masonic temples were under construction in both Iowa and Illinois.

At a grand lodge meeting held in 1842 at Jacksonville, Jonas reported the granting of dispensations to brethren at Nauvoo, Illinois, and at Montrose in Iowa Territory. The work of the Montrose lodge seems to have been progressing satisfactorily. The committee on returns reported that the work of the Rising Sun Lodge (Montrose) was correct, and recommended the granting of their charter, which was ordered done.

The lodge at Nauvoo was under investigation and there was considerable debate regarding its activities. H. G. Sherwood and L. N. Scovil, representing the Nauvoo Lodge at this meeting, were at first refused representation, but after paying their dues were allowed to take their seats. 18 The grand lodge then appointed a committee of three to examine the books and papers of the Nauvoo Lodge. After several days this committee reported that the papers were in order, but recommended


18 Handwritten copy of the proceedings of this meeting made by Henry Sherwood, dated Nauvoo, 1844, ULF.
that the main body suspend the Nauvoo Lodge another year because there
might be something wrong. At that time Jonas made "a flaming speech
on their behalf in which he said they were the clearest books and papers
that had been brought from any lodge." He then said that he firmly be-
lieved that if they "were not Mormons that lodge would stand the highest
of any lodge." After Jonas, Sherwood spoke and said "he had long been
of the opinion it was by reason of being Mormons that we are kept at
arms length." Following a prolonged debate Jonas appointed a com-
mittee to further study the matter, and particularly these irregularities:
(1) balloting for more than one applicant at one and the same time, (2)
the privilege of balloting for or against an applicant having been done
away with, (3) the receiving of applicants into the organization on the
basis that they reform and make restitution in the future, and (4) the
making of Joseph Smith a Master Mason on sight.

    After an investigation the committee reported;

    There is some reason to fear that the intention and
ancient landmarks of our institution have been departed
from to an inexcusable extent. The facts in the case,
however, your committee are of the opinion, can only
be satisfactorily explained by careful inspection of the
whole proceeding. Such a course your committee
believes is due as well to the brethren of Nauvoo as
to the grand lodge and craft generally, should our fears
prove groundless, as the committee still hope they
will, none will be more benefited by the investigation
than the lodge under consideration.20

Following some debate it was concluded that the injunction suspending

19Iadem.
20Morcombe, pp. 448-449.
the labors of the Nauvoo Lodge be continued until the next regular communication of the grand lodge. A special committee was appointed to examine the original minutes of the Nauvoo Masonic organization and to inquire further into the alleged irregularities and charges of misconduct.

When the majority of this special committee reported, its spokesman said the Nauvoo Lodge, instead of being a thing apart and autonomous, was a recognized part of the religious community. Its hall was a public building and its accounts passed, like several other quasi-public funds, through the hands of the governing authorities of the Church. (The Iowa Masonic Library has preserved a day-book used by Joseph Smith in keeping track of various accounts. In this day-book many accounts both debit and credit are found, indicating the lodge funds were considered as but a department of the community resources.)

The majority of the committee also found that the grand master was indiscreet in conferring a great Masonic honor on Joseph Smith and Sidney Rigdon. A minority of the committee reported that they felt no irregularities existed and recommended the Nauvoo Lodge be given a charter at once.

A special meeting was held on July 16, 1842, to consider the case and on August 11 it was decided to suspend the lodge. The reason for the suspension seems to have been not only based on the irregularities

\[21\text{Ibid., p. 451.}\]
that may have existed but also a growing fear that if the Mormon lodge continued to grow it would soon dominate the entire Masonic organization of the state. That the Mormon lodges could have done so is evident when the number of Masons in each lodge is examined. Bodley Lodge had 25 members; Harmony, 23; Springfield, 43; Columbus, 16; Macon, 22; Joliet, 25; Rushville, 20; Western Star, 23; Case, 12; Saint Johns, 10; and Warren, 8. All of the non-Mormon Masons in Illinois totaled about 227, whereas Mormon Masons by January, 1843, totaled 330. If all Mormon Masons both in Illinois and Iowa are counted, then there were 506 Mormons involved in Masonry. If elections were held on a one-to-one basis Mormons would have held the balance of power. James C. Bilderback, a Mason, concluded in his master's thesis that the charges against the Mormons were minor offenses and many other lodges were guilty of many of the same infractions. Therefore, he argues, it was fear of Mormon domination of the Masonic order that was probably the primary factor in the decision to suspend the Nauvoo Lodge.22

The Mormons already had pending petitions for a number of additional lodges in Illinois. These petitions, if granted, would have given Mormons not only more Masons than any other group in the state but also more lodges than any other. This prompted the Quincy lodge to charge that the Mormons were only becoming Masons in order to gain control of the state.

22 Bilderback, p. 65.
The suspension was accepted by the Nauvoo Lodge without hesitation and all activities ceased immediately and additional records were submitted to the grand lodge for examination. Following an extended inspection, the grand lodge removed the injunction and again authorized the Nauvoo Lodge to operate under dispensation. The grand master not only renewed Nauvoo's, but also granted to Helm and Dye two additional dispensations, and a third was granted to a lodge at Keokuk.

It seems these dispensations were granted following the 1842 election in which the Mormons displayed such great political power and it is perhaps safe to say they were granted so as to placate Mormon political ambitions. Many of the state's leading politicians were Masons and it was evident by this time that the Mormon vote could aid a candidate in securing a political office.

However, a number of Masons in Illinois were not in agreement with the grand master and continued to work against the Mormons. By April, 1844, these anti-Mormon Masons had enough power that George Watt's and Horace Eldridge's request for two new dispensations was refused. In October, 1844, only four months after the death of Joseph Smith, the grand lodge resolved that all fellowship with predominantly Mormon lodges be withdrawn. Masonic associations in these lodges were declared clandestine and all members suspended. Even the Rising Sun Lodge at Montrose, which had never had any questionable practices

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23 Horace Eldridge, "Diary of Horace Eldridge," April 6, 1844, found in L. D. S. Church Historian's Library.
and was usually commended for its activities, had its charter revoked. The probable reason for this suspension was the anti-Mormon feeling that swept the state of Illinois.

On April 10, 1845, Brigham Young advised Scovil to suspend the work of the Masons in Nauvoo. This was apparently not done because in June meetings were still being held, but activities were suspended after the general exodus of the Saints to the west.24

Joseph Smith and the Masons

Joseph Smith became a Master Mason March 15, 1842. As a part of his initiation he swore that he was entering the Masonic order of his own volition and with pure motives, and also pledged that his major wish in joining the order was to be of service to his fellow men. The Prophet was told that his entrance into the Masons would affect neither his religion nor his politics.25 He then promised to ever conceal and never reveal any parts, art or arts, point or points, of the secret arts and mysteries of ancient Freemasonry which he was going to receive, except to brother Masons or within a body of just and lawfully constituted lodges. This promise was repeated by Joseph Smith in taking each of the three degrees. He further pledged that he would not take part in initiating,

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25"Description of the Ceremonies Used in Opening the Nauvoo Lodge of Entered Apprentice Masons," March 15, 1842, (n.p., n.d.). The writer at the owner's request, cannot cite the holder of this unpublished document.
passing or raising a candidate at one communication without a regular
dispensation from the grand master lodge. He swore that he would
never initiate a woman into the lodge. (Probably because a few Mormon
women received their endowments the Masons charged the Prophet with
violating this oath.) He also said that he would not violate the chastity
of a Master Mason's wife, mother, sister, or daughter, knowing them
to be such, nor suffer it to be done by others if in his power to prevent
it. When Nancy Rigdon, Sarah Pratt and others accused the Prophet
of trying to "seduce" them, he was accused of disregarding his Masonic
covenants. The Mormon leader maintained he had faithfully kept his
promise because he had not attempted to entice Mrs. Pratt, and had
proposed marriage, not seduction, to Miss Rigdon.  

James Cummings, one of the Prophet's intimate friends and a
Master Mason, officiated in the Prophet's initiation ceremony, and later
stated that to his surprise and pleasure Joseph Smith seemed "to under-
stand some of the features of the ceremony better than any Mason and
that he made explanations that rendered the rites much more beautiful
and full of meaning."  

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26 Endowment is a word used to describe the Mormon temple cere-
mony. For a discussion of the Mormon endowment see James E. Tal-

27 Affidavit of John W. Rigdon, given in full in Joseph F. Smith,
Jr., and Richard C. Evans, Blood Atonement and the Origin of Plural

28 Horace Cummings, "History of Horace Cummings," found in the
Brigham Young University Library.
May 4, 1842, in the upstairs portion of the Prophet's store he proposed a ritual which was to become the ceremony for the Mormon temple then under construction. The Masons charged the Prophet with violating his sacred Masonic oath and incorporating many of the signs, words, tokens, penalties and wording of the Masonic rites into this sacred covenant.

In an attempt to counteract these charges the Prophet said that the essential parts of the endowment had been revealed to him by God. Recognizing some similarity, Joseph Smith explained that the Masonic ritual was an apostate temple rite. For example, he told Benjamin F. Johnson as they lay in bed one night, "Freemasonry, as at present, is the apostate endowment, as sectarian religion is the apostate religion." 29 Heber C. Kimball is reported to have said, "The Prophet Joseph, after becoming a Mason, said that Masonry had been taken from the Priesthood," and Wilford Woodruff, an early Mormon Apostle, taught that Masonry was of ancient vintage. 30

There seems to be no general agreement among scholars regarding the origin of Masonry. For example, S. H. Goodwin, a Mason, argues that modern Masonry is a fragmentary presentation of the ancient order established by King Solomon and has been handed down through the centuries, and at least one contemporary of Joseph Smith argued that

29Johnson, p. 196.

Masonry was a work of Satan. Some writers have argued that the Masons originated with the Druids, Culdees or the Rosicrucians, while others found Masonic beginnings in the Greek mystery religions. The Masonic rite itself attributes its origin to Solomon, and the builder of his temple. Some contend that Adam was a Mason and argue that there have been Masons on earth since his time. Still others, including Hugh Nibley, find Masonic ritual among the early Egyptians. The Book of the Dead and the Coffin Text discovered in ancient Egypt seem to contain strong resemblances to Masonic rites of a later period. It is thought by a few authorities that during the crusades rites similar to those later adopted by the Masons were brought back to Europe. Evidence seems to indicate that these rites were being performed by several groups in Syria and Palestine. Thus Joseph Smith's views regarding Masonic beginnings seem to be just as logical and factual as those expressed by critics of Mormonism. If Nibley's view is correct, the Prophet's

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33 William Morgan, Illustrations of Masonry (Illinois: Ezra B. Cook, Chicago 90, 1827).

34 In fact Dr. Hugh Nibley, professor of religion at Brigham Young University, has recently been doing extensive work relative to Egyptian ritual. He claims he has found rites and ritual among the early Egyptians much like that performed by the Masons and very much akin to the Mormon temple endowment.
opinions with respect to Masonry are probably more accurate than his contemporaries would have believed.

In spite of the Mormon justification regarding the origin of the endowment, Masons still accused the Prophet of stealing his ceremony from them. At least one writer claimed that it was because of the Prophet's initiating a ceremony similar to Masonic rites that his plea for mercy at his death by means of the Masonic distress cry was ignored. He further charged that the Mormon leader was unworthy of assistance from his Masonic brethren and thus "met an ignominious death on the afternoon of June 27, 1844." 35 Brigham Young and John Taylor charged that there were Masons in the mob that murdered their Prophet and that at least a few Masons helped plan his death.

It is evident that what seemed to be an over-enthusiasm for Masonry on the part of many Mormons helped cause conflict in Hancock County. Alleged Mormon imitation of parts of the Masonic ritual was another factor in arousing antagonism. The Masons also charged the Prophet with violating his oath in the alleged seduction attempt of Nancy Rigdon, a Master Mason's daughter, and other Masons argued that the Prophet was actually guilty of seducing several Master Mason's wives and daughters.

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35 "Description of the Ceremonies Used in Opening the Nauvoo Lodge of Entered Apprentice Masons," p. 63.
CHAPTER VII

PLURAL MARRIAGE

Introduction

When the Mormons arrived in Illinois, many Americans were experiencing anxiety and uncertainty over sexual values and the proper role of women in American life. Ministers and journalists pointed with alarm to the spread of prostitution, the incidence of divorce and the lax and hypocritical morality of the growing cities. The Saints, with their moral background and belief that sexual impurity was one of the most serious of all sins, did not look with favor on movements that advocated a modification of the Hebraic moral standard. ¹

Yet the Mormons were frequently accused of practicing "spiritual wifery" which, in the public mind, meant sexual relations between men and women who were unmarried but who felt a sort of spiritual consanguinity for one another. This special relationship seemed to give the parties involved moral justification to engage in activities normally thought adulterous. Therefore, in the true meaning of the term the Saints probably never practiced spiritual wifery. Some members of the

Church did practice plural marriage, which was in spite of its wide publicity never a very popular doctrine, and in every instance that can be authentically documented, a marriage ceremony was performed.  

As early as 1836 members of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints were accused of believing in plural marriage. But it was not until the Nauvoo period of Church history that this doctrine became a major source of non-Mormon resentment.

The Historical Development of Plural Marriage

While "translating" the Bible Joseph Smith read that many of Israel's most illustrious prophets and kings had more than one wife. In an attempt to determine the validity of such a practice he went to the Lord in prayer, at which time, according to Joseph F. Smith, sixth president of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints and son of Hyrum

\[^{2}\text{Stanley Ivins, "Notes on Mormon Polygamy," The Western Humanities Review, X (Summer, 1956). Ivins clearly demonstrates that the percentage of those practicing plural marriage increased only in times of great moral re-dedication such as 1856 when the number of plural marriages increased 63% or when the government passed laws against the Mormon marriage system. He also shows that Mormon men in general only married one additional wife, or at the most two. This was true in about eighty percent of the cases studied. This would seem to indicate that plural marriage in so-called average times was not the most popular of all Mormon doctrines. See also J. E. Hulett, "Social Role and Personal Security in Polygamy," American Journal of Sociology, V (1940), p. 542; J. E. Hulett, Jr., "The Social Role of the Mormon Polygamous Male," American Sociological Review, VIII (1943), p. 287. Another factor relative to the number of Mormons who practiced polygamy is the Prophet's statement that this doctrine was never meant for the whole Church, although under certain circumstances any worthy male member may have been able to obtain permission to practice plural marriage. D.H.C., V, p. 46.}\]
Smith, the doctrine of plural marriage was revealed.\textsuperscript{3} W. W. Phelps in a letter to Brigham Young in support of this view states "the principle of plural marriage was given as early as 1831!" and that he was in the meeting when it was first made known.\textsuperscript{4} The Prophet, it is said, confided in several of his intimate associates such as Lyman E. Johnson and Oliver Cowdery that plural marriage was to be a part of the "restoration of all things." According to him a man could, under certain conditions, have more than one wife, but this principle was not to be used to gratify his lusts or carnal desires. A woman was not justified in

\textsuperscript{3}Andrew Jenson, "Plural Marriage," The Historical Record, VI (May, 1887), p. 219. The following article appeared in the Warsaw Signal, April 25, 1844, relative to the beginning of plural marriage. "I have frequently noticed in the columns of your paper, articles concerning the doctrine of spiritual wives, a part of the Mormon creed. Nothing as yet has come to my view which gave entire satisfaction; and as it is my turn now, just command silence for a few moments that I may have a hearing.

In the year 1834, at Kirtland, Ohio, the aforementioned step in the heavenly stairway was located. Much excitement grew out of this measure; many of the Saints demurred, and the more knowing ones readily perceived that it was entirely too liberal in its provision--even to be constitutional. In a word the Saints rejected it; only a few of the more licentious delighting in it. The doctrine was hushed up, as being sent before its time--for be it known that Mormonism is a system of progression. The next glimpse I obtained of this hellish spiritual wife doctrine, was in the year 1836, just on the eve of hostilities in Missouri. The presence of the enemy furnished subjects of reflections, to the exclusion of the old eye-sore for the second time. But iniquity never lies normant. No sooner did prosperity smile upon the fraternity in Nauvoo than the secret workings of the same faction were set in motion. Success attends perseverance and success emboldens the culprit. Such seems to be the results in the present discontent made glorious--sudden appearance of the spirit of compromise and which serves two purposes, viz., is a cloak to the spiritual wife system." The writer has been unable to determine the authorship of the above article.

\textsuperscript{4}William W. Phelps to Brigham Young, August 12, 1861, ULF.
marrying more than one man unless death robbed her of her spouse.

It is believed by some that Joseph Smith began to practice plural marriage as early as 1835. Foster Walker, an inhabitant of Hancock County during the Mormon era, in an article written in 1902, says the Mormons first practiced spiritual wifery in Kirtland, Ohio, in 1835.5

And in a letter to George S. Gibbs, Benjamin F. Johnson said,

At Kirtland I learned from my sister's husband, Liman R. Sherman, who was close to the Prophet, and received it from him, 'That the ancient order of plural marriage was again to be practiced by the Church.' This, at the time, did not impress my mind deeply, although there lived then with his family [the Prophet's] a neighbor's daughter, Fannie Alger, a very nice and comely young woman about my own age, toward whom not only myself, but everyone seemed partial, for the amiability of her character; and it was whispered even then that Joseph loved her.6

Warren Parrish, a special friend of Joseph Smith, and C. G. Webb, the Prophet's grammar teacher, both claim Fannie Alger was the Mormon leader's wife and was sealed to him in Kirtland.7 Miss Alger is also listed by Andrew Jenson as one of the Prophet's first plural wives but

5Foster Walker, "The Mormons in Hancock County," The Review (March 27, 1902), p. 3.

6Benjamin F. Johnson to George S. Gibbs, July 1, 1911, copy in possession of the writer.

7Whilhelm Wyl, Mormon Portraits, Joseph Smith the Prophet, His Family and His Friends (Salt Lake City: n.p., 1886), p. 57, supposedly quoting Sarah Pratt, states that when Emma Smith found out about this sealing of Joseph to Fannie Alger she became so furious that she drove the girl from her house. Joseph Smith III emphatically states that Sarah Pratt told him his father never practiced plural marriage. Joseph Smith III, Joseph Smith III and the Restoration (Independence: Herald Publishing House, 1952), p. 70.
no wedding date is given. Oliver Cowdery in a letter to his brother, Warren A. Cowdery, dated Far West, Missouri, January 21, 1838, speaks of the very sordid "affair of his [Joseph Smith's] and Fanny Alger's," but makes no mention of plural marriage.

One writer concluded that Oliver Cowdery married Annie Lyman, his second wife, in Kirtland, Ohio, and Jared Carter, it is said, wanted another wife but his request was refused. Plural marriage seems to have been practiced early in the history of the Church but kept, for the most part, secret and it seems that only a few were told about the doctrine and even fewer (at least while Joseph Smith was alive) were asked to live it as a principle. The difficulty came when some practiced this

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8Jenson, p. 233.

9Oliver Cowdery to Warren A. Cowdery, January 21, 1838, found in the Huntington Library, copy in possession of the writer. This letter is also quoted in Fawn M. Brodie, "Polygamy Shocks the Mormons," The American Mercury (April, 1946), p. 402.

10Parkin quotes Brigham Young as saying, "They [Joseph Smith and Oliver Cowdery] had a revelation that the order of patriarchal marriage and the sealing was right. Oliver said unto Joseph, 'Br. Joseph why don't we go into the order of polygamy and practice it as the ancients did. We know it is true, then why delay.' Joseph's reply was 'I know that we know it is true and from God, but the time has not yet come.' This did not seem to suit Oliver who expressed a determination to go into the order of plural marriage anyhow, although Joseph said, 'Oliver if you go into this thing it is not with my faith or consent.' Disregarding the counsel of Joseph, Oliver Cowdery took to wife Annie Lyman, cousin to George A. Smith. From that time he went into darkness and lost the spirit. Annie Lyman is still alive, a witness [sic] to these things." This quote comes from the Charles L. Walker Journal, page 444. According to Walker this statement was made by Brigham Young, July 26, 1872, in the Fourteenth Ward meeting house in Salt Lake City. See Parkin, p. 169.
doctrine without permission.\textsuperscript{11}

**Plural Marriage in Nauvoo**

By 1841 or 1842 plural marriage was secretly being practiced with increased frequency. According to the private journals of Joseph L. Robinson and Edward Stevenson, Joseph Smith was visited by an angel with a drawn sword . . . saying unto him, Joseph unless you go to and immediately teach that principle [polygamy] and put the same in practice that he [Joseph] should be slain for, or thus saith the Lord, the time has now come that I will raise up seed unto me as I spoke by my servant Jacob as is recorded in the Book of Mormon, therefore I command my people.\textsuperscript{12}

As to whether or not the event described above actually happened is beyond the scope of historical research but it is apparent that something caused the Prophet to increase the number of his plural wives. Whereas from 1835-1841 he had, according to Brodie, married only eight women, in the years from 1842-1844 he married, she says, an additional forty-one.\textsuperscript{13}

With the great increase in the number of plural wives it became increasingly difficult to keep plural marriage a secret. John C. Bennett, following his excommunication from the Church, accused the Prophet of

\textsuperscript{11}D.H.C., V, p. 46.


teaching and practicing plural marriage. Oliver Olney, another former member of the Church, in a booklet published in 1843, also charged that "spiritual wifery" was both taught and practiced in Nauvoo; and James J. Strang wrote in a letter to Louisa Sanger that Joseph Smith introduced and taught spiritual wifery. Jesse Haven denied this was true but acknowledged that plural marriage was being pursued.

It is reported that because of opposition on the part of a number of members of the Church, Joseph Smith assigned Udney Jacobs the task of searching the scriptures for passages that would sanction polygamy. A tract was published by Jacobs which advocated the practice of plural marriage. John D. Lee, in talking about this pamphlet, said;

During the winter Joseph, the Prophet, set a man by name of Sidney Hay Jacobs to select from the Old Bible scriptures as pertained to polygamy, or celestial marriage, to write it in pamphlet form, and to advocate that doctrine. This he did as a feeler among the people,

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15 Oliver Olney, The Absurdities of Mormonism Portrayed (Hancock Co., Illinois: n.p., 1843), copy found in Harvard University Library, copy in possession of the writer.

16 Jesse Haven, Celestial Marriage and the Plurality of Wives (Cape of Good Hope: The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, n.d.), copy found in the Harvard University Library, copy in possession of the writer.


to pave the way for celestial marriage. 19

Lee is probably partially incorrect in his assertion. In a letter to the
Prophet written in 1844 Jacobs begins by saying, "Dear Sir: I hope you
will not consider this letter an intrusion--I HAVE NOT TO BE SURE THE
PLEASURE OF A PERSONAL ACQUAINTANCE WITH YOU."20 This
would seem to indicate the Prophet had not asked Jacobs to publish his
essay. As further support for this view Jacobs, in a letter to President
Martin Van Buren, says, "these Mormons know but very little of me, but
sir, I know them and I know them to be a deluded and dangerous set of
fanatics."21

Jacobs' pamphlet, however, is especially interesting because it
was published in Nauvoo when Gentiles were just beginning to hear
rumors that plural marriages were taking place in that city. Whether
or not Jacobs was asked by Joseph Smith to write "The Peace Maker"
is perhaps not the most important question. What is important is the
public's reaction to this booklet. It was evident that many people were
publicly, at least, not in favor of plural marriage. Possibly Joseph
Smith, partly because of Gentile opposition, kept the doctrine as secret
as possible. 22 Heber C. Kimball, for example, was requested "to keep

19 John D. Lee, Mormonism Unveiled: The Life and Confessions of

20 Udney H. Jacobs to General Joseph Smith, January 6, 1844,
ULF. Italics have been inserted by the author.

21 Udney H. Jacobs to President Martin Van Buren, March 19,
1840, found in the Illinois State Historical Society Library.

22 The Millennial Star, March 15, 1850.
it a secret," and not "divulge it even to his first wife for fear she would not receive the doctrine." It was kept so secret that many members of the Church denied that it was even taught. Edward Bunker, for instance, wrote;

After the time was spent there [Chicago] during which I told them I was a Latter-day Saint and was going to Nauvoo. They were much surprised and accused the Mormons of believing in polygamy. I told them it was only a sleer and a fake statement.  

William Marks, president of the Nauvoo Stake, publicly stated,

I would further state that I know of no order in the Church which admits of a plurality of wives, and do not believe that Joseph Smith ever taught such doctrine.  

Even though some members of the Church denied the existence of plural marriage, there are a number of documents to support the view that, among the faithful, many such marriages were being performed. Martha Hall, a non-member of the Church, in a letter dated June 16, 1844, stated,

Joseph had a revelation last summer purporting to be from the Lord, allowing the Saints the privilege of having ten living wives at one time, I am certain conspicuous characters among them . . . . I believe hundreds have been deceived.

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23Helen Mar Whitney, p. 74.


25The Wasp, April 26, 1843.

26Martha Hall to her mother, June 16, 1844, New England Quarterly (1936).
On July 27, 1842, Sarah Ann Whitney wrote that she was to be married
to Joseph Smith and that her own father was going to perform the cere-
mony. 27 Eliza Partridge said,

After a time my sister and myself went to live in the
family of the Prophet Joseph Smith. We lived there
about three years. While there he taught us the plan of
celestial marriage and asked us to enter into that order
with him. This was truly a trial for me. . . . We were
sealed in 1843 by Heber C. Kimball in the presence of
witnesses. 28

Emily Austin reported that she rode with Joseph Smith in his carriage
in 1843 and was told about plural marriage. 29

Gradually rumors became more and more persistent regarding the
Mormon matrimonial system. Metta V. Fuller, in a published novel,

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27 This note is found at the end of a revelation giving Newel K.
Whitney the words of the marriage ceremony, original in the L. D. S.
Church Historian's Library.

28 Eliza Maria Partridge Lyman, "Journal of Eliza Maria Partridge
Lyman," abridged by herself from a more detailed journal kept by her-
self, found in the L. D. S. Church Historian's Library.

29 Emily M. Austin, Mormonism or Life Among the Mormons
For additional statements regarding plural marriage in Nauvoo see,
statement of Eliza M. A. Munson to N. B. Lundwall, June 1931,
Brigham Young University Library; narrative of Mrs. Franklin D.
Richards, written in 1880, Bancroft Library, Berkeley, California;
memories of Harriet Decker Young, Brigham Young University Library;
Mary E. Lightner talk given at Brigham Young University, 1905; state-
ment of William Law, son of William Law, found in The Improvement
Era, VI (May, 1903), pp. 507-510; talk given by Lorenzo Snow at St.
George, Utah, May 8, 1899, Brigham Young University Library; diary
of Eliza R. Snow, Bancroft Library, Berkeley, California; Mrs. Mary
Knowlton Pack to Mr. C. L. Wolfe, Brigham Young University Library;
Mrs. T. B. H. Stenhouse, An Englishwoman in Utah (London: Sampson,
Law, Marston, Searle & Rivington, 1880), p. 211
accused the Prophet of instigating this doctrine.\textsuperscript{30} She describes it as being most licentious, crude and vile. Henry Caswell said in a tract published in 1842 that the Mormons practiced spiritual wifeism. His description of Mormon social life probably caused people to believe that Nauvoo was a "sink of iniquity."\textsuperscript{31} And George Washington Shaw in a seminar paper written at Brown University says, "The Prophet very generously allows his chief supporters polygamy, provided the additional wives receive them spiritually and the marriage ceremony is performed by himself."\textsuperscript{32} Foster Walker argues that "spiritual wifery was one of the leading causes of the Mormon-Gentile trouble in Hancock County."\textsuperscript{33}

A few members of the Church seem to have used the doctrine of plural marriage in an attempt to gratify their carnal lusts. John C. Bennett, for example, apparently seduced the wife of Orson Pratt while Elder Pratt was serving as a missionary to Britain. A series of affidavits were published in The Wasp by several Mormons stating that they knew Mrs. Pratt had been immoral with Bennett. Publishing affidavits, Bennett accused the Prophet of attempting to make Mrs. Pratt his spiritual wife and said this doctrine was in reality the cause of the entire

\textsuperscript{30}Metta V. Fuller, Mormon Wives (New York: Derby & Jackson, 1856).


\textsuperscript{32}George Washington Shaw, "Rise of Mormonism" (manuscript written in 1850), Illinois State Historical Society Library.

\textsuperscript{33}Foster Walker, "The Mormons in Hancock County," p. 2.
affair. Bennett claimed he had evidence in his possession that would prove "Joe Smith had seduced scores of innocent women, and that there is a general system of debauchery and prostitution prevailing amongst the Mormons."\(^{34}\) He further stated as a fact that Joseph Smith picked his victims and then told them the Lord had given him permission to sleep with them.\(^{35}\)

Francis M. Higbee was accused of using "spiritual wifeism" as a motive for seducing many young girls in Nauvoo.\(^{36}\) And at least a few other Mormons seem to have abused this principle in that women were led to believe they should not resist advances because in doing so they would be thwarting the will of the Lord.

Bennett also published documents reportedly written by Nancy Rigdon stating that Joseph Smith had tried to seduce her. This prompted her father, Sidney Rigdon, to publish a denial.\(^{37}\) Dickerson says that Joseph Smith authorized Stephen Markham to publish an affidavit that Nancy Rigdon was a disreputable girl; but following Sidney Rigdon's letter, several other Mormons were authorized to state that Nancy

\(^{34}\) Illinois Republican, July 20, 1842.

\(^{35}\) Idem.

\(^{36}\) Sworn affidavits by Joseph Smith, Brigham Young, Sidney Rigdon, Hyrum Smith, Joel S. Mills, H. J. Sherwood, Heber C. Kimball and Cyrus H. Wheelock, original in the Joseph Smith papers, 1844, L. D. S. Church Historian's Library.

\(^{37}\) The Wasp, April 27, 1842. Elder Rigdon's entire letter is published in this newspaper.
Rigdon was a virtuous girl and that Stephen Markham was a liar. Following the alleged disclosures of Nancy Rigdon, Martha Brotherton published an affidavit stating that Joseph Smith had tried to make her his wife. Her affidavit was followed by testimony from her sister, Mrs. J. McIlwrich, which said that Martha Brotherton was an immoral woman who was prone to lie about things. Other affidavits came from Heber C. Kimball, Brigham Young, Vilate Kimball, and C. L. Higbee regarding the immoral character of Miss Brotherton. Martha Brotherton's brother claimed the Mormon affidavits were lies because his sister always told the truth.

The Quincy Whig published an affidavit of Mrs. Milessa Schendle wherein she said Joseph Smith had tried to make her his wife. Dr. Robert Foster made public accusation that Joseph Smith had attempted to seduce his wife as part of the doctrine of plural marriage. Andrew Lamonoux swore that Dr. Foster was involved with a lady in Nauvoo other than his wife and she was with child. Joseph Smith, Lamonoux said, observed Foster's conduct and reproved him. This was, in his opinion, the reason for Foster's allegation.

Ebenezer Robinson reports that Wilson Law's wife heard of the doctrine of eternal marriage and asked the Prophet to seal her and Wilson.

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38 Dickerson, p. 54.
39 Austin, p. 105.
40 Quincy Whig, July 16, 1842.
41 Affidavit of Andrew Lamonoux, June 10, 1844, ULF.
for time and all eternity. Wilson Law was guilty of adultery and Joseph Smith refused her request. She then asked to be sealed to the Prophet as one of his plural wives (for eternity). When the Prophet refused her second request, she made advances, but was spurned. She then told Law the Prophet had tried to seduce her. Law believed his wife and attempted to arouse public feeling against the Prophet. 42

Following this publicity Mrs. T. F. Olney left the Church and gave as her reason the fact that the members were practicing polygamy and living in adultery. Then her relative, Oliver Olney, wrote the aforementioned pamphlet wherein he said;

The subject of polygamy amongst the Latter-day Saints is no longer to be kept in the dark; as many are actually attached to the second living companion; and a door is fast opening on this subject, that many is arguing it to be the will of God. 43

John C. Bennett's book with its "disclosures" regarding the various kinds of wives in Nauvoo seems to have had an impact on the public mind. Such extensive publicity appears to have aroused the public against Mormonism and its marriage system. An article published in the Methodist Review on Mormonism charged Joseph Smith with being immoral from his early youth, and said the Prophet had abducted his first wife against the wishes of her family. Joseph Smith, the writer said,

42 Robinson, p. 110; see also Alexander Niebuhr, "Diary of Alexander Niebuhr," Church Historian's Library. Niebuhr confirms the Robinson story in its essential aspects.

43 Olney, p. 10.
was a debased and immoral individual.44

Meanwhile, the Prophet's first wife was somewhat less than enthusiastic in her support of plural marriage. It is reported that one day in March, 1843, while William C. Staines was passing the house of Joseph Smith, he saw a man riding a very fine sorrel horse. Joseph and Emma were standing in the doorway of their home.

Emma praised the horse--Joseph said 'would you like to have it?' 'Oh yes,' she said, 'I would like that'--Joseph said 'well I will buy it for you on one condition.' 'What is it said she?' He replied, 'that you will never mention the words spiritual wife to me any more, as long as you live.' 'I will gladly do that,' she said and he purchased it, paying 150 dollars for it.45

Eudocia B. Marsh, a frequent non-Mormon visitor to Nauvoo, reports that on one occasion,

Ten or twelve young women were assembled here, laughing and talking. Mrs. Emma Smith presently joined them, and recognizing my sister, whom she had met before, entered into conversation with her. Upon my sister asking, 'Mrs. Smith where does your Church get this doctrine of spiritual wives?' Her face flushed scarlet, and her eyes blazed as she replied, 'Straight from hell, Madam!'46

On another occasion it is reported that,

Emma went upstairs and pulled Eliza R. Snow downstairs by the hair of her head as she was staying there. Although she had consented to give him [Joseph Smith] one or more women in the beginning. It was rumored


45Report of William C. Staines, March, 1843, ULF.

while I, M. A. Barzee Boyce, was in Nauvoo that she
tot sic in such a rage about it that she left home and
went down to Quincy but came back again while I was
there. 47

While not publicly sanctioning plural marriage, the leaders of the
Church were unable to keep rumors of its existence from the people.
The Quincy Herald reported in July, 1842, that both the Sangamo Journal
and the Alton Telegraph had published articles regarding the "panderers
and licentiousness and moral depravity" in Nauvoo. 48 Such rumors con-
tinued to circulate as more and more people became involved in polygamy.
In a letter written by a non-Mormon living in Nauvoo dated September 8,
1843, the following appears;

A month ago or more one of the Apostles, Adams[ ? ]
by name, returned from a two years' mission to England
bringing with him a wife and child, although he had left
a wife and family here when he went away--and I am told
that his first wife is recor.ded to this certainty [sic] at
first unwelcome guest to her home, for husband and some
others have reasoned with her that plurality of wives is
taught in the Bible. 49

Christopher Layton reports that in August, 1843, the revelation
concerning the eternity and plurality of marriage was read by Hyrum
Smith before the high council and stake presidency. James Allred claims
it was also read, September 23, 1843, and that Hyrum Smith said;

47Mary A. Barzee Boyce, "Diary of Mary A. Barzee Boyce,"
Brigham Young University Library, p. 40.

48Quincy Herald, July 21, 1842.

49Charlotte Haven to her mother, September 8, 1843; quoted in
full in William Mulder and A. Russell Mortensen, Among the Mormons
He did not believe it at first, it was so contrary to his feelings, but he said he knew Joseph was a Prophet of God, so he made a covenant that he would not eat, drink, or sleep until he knew for himself, that he had got a testimony that it was true, that he had even heard the voice of God concerning it. 50

Hyrum promised the brethren that those who "accepted it should be blessed and sustained in the Church by the spirit of God and the confidence of the Saints, and they who rejected it should fall away in their faith and power." 51 Thomas Grover reports essentially the same thing and adds that William Marks and another man rejected the revelation. At least one of the other men who rejected this doctrine was Elder B. Winchester. In a letter to Brigham Young, Jedediah M. Grant reported Winchester's conduct as follows;

He is teaching his shafts at you and the quorum over which you preside. Stating both in public and in private that you have slandered him here and in New York, Boston and elsewhere, and in your quorum did force upon him the gag when he had his trial in Nauvoo.

The reason for this was not as you and others have asserted because he had disobeyed your counsel but the main reason was you knew him to be a deadly enemy of the spiritual wife system and for this opposition he had received all manner of abuse from all who believe in that hellish system. 52

One of the reasons for the publication of the Nauvoo Expositor was to publicly proclaim opposition to the plurality of wives doctrine as

50 This is what James Allred related the night of October 15, 1854, ULF.

51 Christopher Layton, "Life of Christopher Layton," Brigham Young University Library, pp. 10-11.

52 Jedediah M. Grant to President Brigham Young, September 7, 1844, ULF.
taught by the Prophet. This would seem to indicate that the Laws, Fosters, Higbees and Sylvester Emmons, the editor, were opposed to this doctrine. It is evident that there was strong opposition within the Church to the principle of plural marriage; in fact Grover says that beginning in 1843 there was a very strong division in the high council. William Law claimed Hyrum Smith gave him the revelation to read in private and it was never read before the high council.

Following some discussion of this "revelation" other men began to practice the doctrine. Margaret S. Smoot says that her husband, convinced of the divinity of the revelation, took another wife with her (Margaret's) fullest consent. And Richard Ballantyne reports that he was taught this doctrine about this time by John Taylor.

Martha Hall wrote to her parents that the plurality of living wives doctrine was causing trouble for the Mormons in Nauvoo. And Sarah Scott wrote that it was a "damnable doctrine." John C. Bennett claimed that any wife who refused to accept polygamy might be forced

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53 Letter of Thomas Grover, January 10, 1885, Brigham Young University Library.

54 The Salt Lake Tribune, July 31, 1887.

55 Margaret S. Smoot, "Experience of a Mormon Wife," Bancroft Library, Berkeley, California.

56 Elizabeth Ann Whitney, "Leaf From an Autobiography," Brigham Young University Library.

57 Letter of Martha Hall, June 16, 1844, found in Mulder.

58 Letter of Sarah Scott, March 1, 1845, ULF.
to join the lowest order of Saints and thus become available to any Mormon who desired her. This was, of course, not true but nevertheless it was somewhat effective in arousing the public mind against Mormonism.

The Warsaw Signal listed spiritual wifeism as one of the major reasons for its opposition to the Mormons and reported that Emma Smith had been turned out of her house by the Prophet for opposing polygamy and was on her way east on the steamboat Hiberna because she wanted another husband in the person of Ebenezer Robinson or William Law. 59 Other newspapers accused the Mormons of forming another band similar to the Danites. This new band, it was said, included those females, married or unmarried, who believed that there was no way to reach heaven except to become the spiritual wife of an elder in the Church. 60

Partly to alleviate some of the excitement caused by such articles, Joseph Smith gave a speech before the high council in which he is quoted as saying:

President Joseph Smith made an address upon the subject [adultery] which was highly interesting and its tendency was to do away with every evil and practice virtue and holiness before the Lord, that the Church had not received any license for him [the person who was accused of committing adultery] to commit adultery, fornication or any such thing. To the contrary if any man commit adultery he could not receive the Celestial Kingdom of God even if he was saved in any Kingdom it would not be the Celestial Kingdom. He said he thought the many examples that had been manifest—John C. Bennett and others, was sufficient to show the fallacy of

59 Warsaw Signal, April 25, 1844; April 17, 1844.
such a course of conduct.\textsuperscript{61}

After the death of Joseph Smith rumors regarding plural marriage increased. In a letter to J.G. Hardin, W. B. Warren wrote;

The Saints are carrying on amongst themsevles worse than ever, the council had declared all marriages null and void giving either party leave to choose for themselves if they agree to live together, then the man has the right to as many more wives as he can get to live with but his first wife is mistress of all. The pretty women are declared to be of the tribe of Joseph and readily get husbands, the ugly ones are put over to the tribe of Manasseh and are sent to the wilderness or Gentiles. Many separations are taking place and both sexes are leaving.\textsuperscript{62}

The Democratic Free Press published an article in which the Mormons were accused of being more corrupt and licentious than they were before the death of Joseph Smith.\textsuperscript{63} And the Missouri Reporter said the Saints had from three to five wives so they could have more posterity in the next world.\textsuperscript{64} Oliver Olney published a second pamphlet entitled Spiritual Wives in which he called Nauvoo a sink of iniquity and accused the male members of the Church with practicing plural marriage.\textsuperscript{65}

\textsuperscript{61}Wilford Woodruff, "Journal of Wilford Woodruff," November 25, 1843.


\textsuperscript{63}Democratic Free Press, February 25, 1845.

\textsuperscript{64}Missouri Reporter, November 7, 1845.

\textsuperscript{65}Reference is made to this pamphlet in the Missouri Reporter, November 7, 1845. The writer has been unable to locate a copy of this work in the libraries of the country.
William Law said Joseph Smith had purchased girls as servants and then made them his plural wives and further claimed abortion was practiced in Nauvoo to keep such activities secret. One writer accused Joseph Smith of having children by his plural wives. And many writers and observers say plural marriage was one of the reasons Joseph Smith lost his life and his people were driven from the state.

Summary

It is apparent that Joseph Smith taught plural marriage. Less evidence is available supporting the view that he practiced polygamy. However, enough information is in existence that it is fairly safe to assert that the Prophet did marry several women before his martyrdom. Women recorded in their personal diaries or journals that they had been "sealed" to the Mormon Prophet before his death. Others published similar statements in public affidavits which give added support to the contention that the Prophet did initiate plural marriage.

Many people in Hancock County believed the numerous statements of John C. Bennett, Oliver Olney and other contemporaries of the

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66 *Salt Lake Tribune*, July 31, 1887.


69 "Sealing" is a term used by Mormons to describe their marriage ceremony wherein a woman and a man are married "for time and all eternity."
Prophet that the Mormon leader was a licentious seducer of young women. Such declarations played their role in arousing public indignation against the Mormons and their marriage system. If polygamy was not the main reason for the Mormon expulsion, at least it can safely be said that it aroused the moral indignation of many people.
CHAPTER VIII

DISSENSION WITHIN THE CHURCH AS A CAUSE
OF CONFLICT

Introduction

Before the Prophet Joseph Smith escaped from Missouri, there
was discussion among Mormon leaders regarding the future course of
the Church. Edward Partridge argued that the Saints should scatter and
mingle with the general public, congregating together only in small
branches, while Brigham Young contended that large settlements simi-
lar to those they had constructed in Kirtland, Ohio, and Far West,
Missouri, were best. ¹ Brigham Young's view, which reflected that
of the Prophet, was adopted; and in 1839 the Saints, under the direction
of Joseph Smith, gathered in Commerce, Illinois.

At first they were so busy draining a swamp, building a new
city and providing the necessities of life for their families that there
were relatively few internal difficulties. "Mob" attacks in Iowa, though
a problem, seem to have consolidated the Saints feeling of brotherhood. ²

¹See minutes of the conference held at Quincy, Illinois, May 4,
1839, found in Francis Lester Bouquet, "A Compilation of the Original
Documents Concerning the Nauvoo, Illinois, Mormon Settlement with
Pertinent Observation" (Ph.D. dissertation, Temple University, 1939),
p. 502.

June 2, 1839.
However, all was not as calm as would at first appear and soon the Prophet was beset with difficulties precipitated by former members of the Church.

**John C. Bennett**

It seems that whenever a major problem emerged within the Church, secular newspapers were quick to publish vivid accounts of the conflict, generating unfavorable publicity, and accounts printed by the Saints did not always correct the false image that had been created. When several Church and civic leaders became disgruntled with the Prophet and published lurid tales of life in Nauvoo, earlier descriptions were re-enforced with additional falsehoods. Thus much of the conflict between Mormons and Gentiles in Illinois can be directly traced to disaffected excommunicated Saints including the Prophet's former friend and Church leader, John C. Bennett.

Bennett was born in Fairhaven, Massachusetts, August 4, 1804, and in 1808 moved with his parents to Ohio where he acquired training in mathematics and medicine. After only six months instruction he practiced medicine and helped found colleges in Ohio, West Virginia and Indiana; among which was Willoughby University that later awarded him an honorary doctorate and appointed him as its first dean and professor of gynecology. While living in Ohio he became acquainted with Sidney Rigdon and once served with him as a licensed preacher in the "Christian Sect."
Moving to Illinois in 1838, Bennett served as a chaplain in the Black Hawk War and received his quartermaster general appointment from Governor Carlin. He became very active in lobbying on behalf of the Nauvoo Charter after joining the Mormon Church in 1840 and soon was elected mayor of Nauvoo, served as acting counselor in the first presidency of the Church, major general of the Nauvoo Legion, chancellor of the University of Nauvoo, president of the Nauvoo Agricultural and Manufacturing Association, and secretary of the Nauvoo Masonic Lodge. 3

When Orson Pratt returned from a mission to England he was told by Bennett that Joseph Smith had attempted to seduce his wife. Although Mrs. Pratt originally confirmed Bennett's allegations, she finally admitted that she had been immoral with Bennett, not the Prophet. 4 Formal charges were prepared and Bennett was summoned to appear before the first presidency, twelve and bishops where he admitted that the


charges of immoral conduct were true and tearfully heard their decision of disfellowshipment. 5

Following his formal excommunication, allegedly fearing for his life, he concealed himself for a short time in the house of Sidney Rigdon, then fled Nauvoo and began to publish reports that Joseph Smith had attempted to take Mrs. Pratt as a spiritual wife. To counteract this charge affidavits were published in The Wasp endeavoring to prove that Bennett, not the Prophet, was guilty of adultery. Many newspaper articles considered this conflict between Orson Pratt, Joseph Smith, Sarah Pratt, and John C. Bennett, and the fact that Orson Pratt publicly expressed dissatisfaction with the Prophet’s leadership seems to have given credibility, at least among non-Mormons, to some of Bennett's charges. 6

Bennett also accused the Mormon Prophet of teaching a doctrine of immorality and seduction and proclaimed the reorganization of the Danites in Nauvoo by saying they might take his life at any moment. 7 To counteract such charges, Daniel H. Wells published an affidavit that John C. Bennett had appeared before him and said,

5D.H.C., V, p. 18.

6Elder Pratt was, together with his wife, excommunicated from the Church for opposing the Prophet's leadership, but after three or four months was baptized and ordained to his former position in the Quorum of the Twelve and was, for the rest of his life, a loyal Latter-day Saint.

He was never taught anything in the least contrary to the strictest principles of the Gospel or of virtue or the laws of God or man, under any circumstances, or upon any occasion, either directly or indirectly, in word or deed, by Joseph Smith, and that he never knew the said Smith to countenance any improper conduct whatever either in public or private; and that he never did teach to me in private that any illegal, illicit intercourse with females, was under any circumstances justifiable, and that I never knew him to teach others.  

Later Bennett argued that he was forced to make the statement because he feared for his life.  

On May 14th, subsequent to the report of the attempted assassination of ex-governor Boggs of Missouri, Bennett published a statement in the Quincy/Whig charging Porter Rockwell with committing the deed and Joseph Smith with being an accessory "before the fact." Following Rockwell's return from Independence, only eight days after the attempt on the life of Boggs, he visited Bennett at his residence, a hotel in Carthage, and told him to cease publishing reports that he was guilty of the assassination attempt. Bennett, Rockwell said, promised he would not repeat the allegations. However, after Rockwell left the city

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8Idem.  
9D.H.C., V, p. 11  
10Bennett for some time following his trial and excommunication lived in secret in the home of Sidney Rigdon. When asked to oppose Bennett, Rigdon reportedly told D. B. Huntington that he had "better business than opposing J. C. Bennett for he is a gentleman." See handwritten document of D. B. Huntington found in ULF. A letter of Orson Hyde to Brigham Young, September 16, 1844, also confirms the statement of Huntington. He says the activities of Elder Rigdon were not in the best interest of the Church. He also claims Rigdon was in constant correspondence with mobocrats. The original of this letter is in the ULF.  
Bennett traveled to Independence, talked with Boggs, and persuaded him to swear out a warrant for the arrest of Joseph Smith and Porter Rockwell. 12 Fearing for his life, the Prophet secreted himself, and Rockwell went east to live. About this time Bennett appeared in Alton, Illinois, where, in a speech, charged he had affidavits proving Joseph Smith was the sole cause and instigator of the attempt on the life of Boggs. 13 He gave even more spectacular discourses in other cities which prompted Dr. Robert Foster to write that Bennett's disclosures were having an impact only on the worst kind of people and that "good people are not paying any attention to them." 14 Meanwhile, in spite of Foster's optimistic letter, and as a result of John C. Bennett's reports, forty men armed with guns and plenty of powder, were commissioned to serve as a "night watch" around the Prophet's home. 15

Because of the nature of Bennett's charges and the notoriety he received, Church leaders sent George Miller, a prominent Mormon, to inquire into his past. Miller reported;

During many years his poor, but confiding wife, followed him from place to place, with no suspicion of his unfaithfulness to her; at length, however, he became so bold in his departures that it was evident to all around that he was a

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12Idem.

13Alton Telegraph and Democratic Review, July 30, 1842.

14Dr. Robert Foster to Joseph Smith, July 16, 1842, ULF.

15Affidavits indicating what each man received are in ULF.
sore offender, and his wife left him under satisfactory evidence of his adulterous connections.\textsuperscript{16}

Declaring the schism was incurable between himself and the Church, Bennett threatened publicly to further "expose life in Nauvoo," and again charged the Prophet with threatening to take his life.\textsuperscript{17} Largely because of Bennett's disclosures the \textit{Davenport Gazette} printed the following article.

> If one \textsuperscript{sic} tythe of the enormities alleged to have been committed by him \textit{[Joseph Smith]} be true, he should be hung as high as Hamon. The statements of Gen. Bennett appear to have been elicited from him by offense taken at Joe Smith, for having issued a bull of excommunication against him. \ldots All good Mormons abide the fiat of Joe Smith, if he be seduced from the truth, the \textit{Citaded Stormed Surrudus} at discretion.\textsuperscript{18}

In the same issue the editor stated that Joseph Smith's crimes were of the deepest dye and punishment should be inflicted upon him.\textsuperscript{19}

Sensing that Bennett's disclosures were the source of some of the anti-Mormon feeling in Illinois the Prophet spoke in front of the temple and was quoted as saying that "Bennett had given him more trouble than any man with whom he had ever been associated."\textsuperscript{20}

Meanwhile, there were those who believed Bennett's disclosures, causing one newspaper to allege that it had never witnessed such

\textsuperscript{16} \textit{The Wasp}, June 25, 1842.

\textsuperscript{17} \textit{Bloomington Herald}, July 8, 1842.

\textsuperscript{18} \textit{Davenport Gazette}, July 21, 1842.

\textsuperscript{19} \textit{Idem}.

\textsuperscript{20} \textit{Sangamo Journal}, July 22, 1842.
"barefaced villainy as is brought to light in Gen. Bennett's letters concerning Jo. Smith and Mormonism." The writer urged all people in Illinois to oppose such a "monstrous profanity, blasphemy and unparalleled rascality."

Arguing in behalf of the Church the *Quincy Whig* said the Mormons had successfully contradicted the statements of Bennett. Publication of Mary A. Bennett's divorce from John C. Bennett also aided the cause of the Church and prompted George Backman to write that Bennett was a bad man before he joined the Mormons and his quitting them has made no reformation in other parts of his character. He is now the same abolitionist he always was, the same licentious and adulterous husband--the same false and treacherous fiend the same violater and disturber of the peace and happy families. The same sly, cunning, loathsome, detestable, crawling, slimy and foul pollutor of female chastity and reputation.

"According to his own story," the editor of the *Quincy Whig* wrote, "he was the tool and pimp of Smith, in all kinds of mischief and rascality;" and another report stated "it appears that Bennett had been guilty of seduction, adultery, slander, lying and co." James Arlington Bennett said the notoriety which John C. Bennett's "expose" had received would react in favor of the Saints and that "Nauvoo would be increased three

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21 *The Freeman* (Illinois), July 23, 1842.

22 *Quincy Whig*, August 13, 1842.

23 George Backman to General Moses Wilson, January 20, 1843, ULF.

24 *Quincy Whig*, July 23, 1842; July 9, 1842.
hundred fold because of this.⁴⁵ Nevertheless, John C. Bennett was instrumental in aiding the outbreak of much anti-Mormon feeling.⁴⁶

During the summer of 1842 Bennett continued to cause strife against the Saints by lying against Joseph Smith and other Church leaders.⁴⁷ Feeling was so strong in Hancock County that the Prophet expected an armed attack upon the city and when such an attack did not materialize he called for three hundred volunteers to go into the world to defend his character.⁴⁸ More guards were placed around his house, armed with a state cannon and a full supply of small arms.⁴⁹ Eight thousand people in Nauvoo, the summer of 1842, in an attempt to prevent violence signed a "petition of protection" and sent it to the governor of Illinois.⁵⁰

Bennett now traveled east to publish a book exposing life in Nauvoo prompting William Smith to write, "Publishers should refuse to print it because our country is flooded with enough humbugs."⁵¹ The editor of the Quincy Herald declared Bennett's book would be "one of the

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²⁵ Buckingham, p. 185; D. H. C., V, p. 162.


²⁷ Halford, p. 78.

²⁸ Davenport Gazette, July 21, 1842.

²⁹ Idem.

³⁰ The Wasp, July 27, 1842.

³¹ Ibid., August 4, 1842.
richest brochures that ever emanated from the press of any country."  

The announcement in the New York Herald that Bennett was going into some quiet retreat in a final attempt to get his "expose" ready for publication prompted the editor of The Wasp to write;

I Zion's rogue and villain am,
And, so at once, I flunk,
And all may call me, as I said,
A little nasty skunk!  

Governor Ford spoke before the Illinois Legislature December 8, 1842, and argued for repeal of the Nauvoo Charter. Some believed that his speech was prompted by Bennett's prelections which seemed to turn public opinion even more against the Mormons.  

According to Dr. Isaac Galland, Bennett was charging the legislature of Illinois with criminal neglect of duty in their passage of the Nauvoo Charter and delivery of munitions of war to the Mormons. Galland indicated that Bennett failed to inform his audience that he had helped formulate the charter and had worked vigorously in getting the state of Illinois to deliver munitions to the Saints.  

To counteract such statements more affidavits were published and a mass meeting held in Nauvoo in which the following resolution was

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32Quincy Herald, August 25, 1842.

33The Wasp, September 17, 1842.

34Halford, p. 78; Davenport Gazette, November 10, 1842.

35Dr. Isaac Galland to Joseph Smith, March 11, 1843, ULF.
passed.

We do hereby manifest to the world, that so far as we are acquainted with Joseph Smith, we know him to be a good, moral, virtuous, peaceable and patriotic man, and a firm supporter of law, justice and equal rights; that he at all times upholds and keeps inviolate the constitution of this state and the United States. 36

The vice mayor and city council published a document which stated that while the Mormons had been in Illinois they had behaved as good, peaceable citizens and had "availed themselves of no privileges but what were strictly constitutional and guaranteed by the authority of the state." 37

George Colby published a letter in The Wasp in which he said Bennett's book was "low and vulgar and not to be relied upon." 38 Depositions followed from Wilson Law, John Taylor, Wilford Woodruff, Vinson Knight, Heber C. Kimball, John P. Green, William Marks, George A. Smith, Charles Shumway, Orson Spencer and Brigham Young denying all the charges of Bennett. 39 Yet James Flanagan and the editor of the Iowa Standard reported that Bennett's accusations were having an affect on Church members and "people are still more alarmed than ever on account of Bennett and his damages." 40 Others believed that

36 D.H.C., V, p. 70.

37 Idem.

38 The Wasp, April 26, 1843.

39 Affidavit found in ULF.

40 James Flanagan, "Diary of James Flanagan," August 1, 1843, original located in the L.D.S. Church Historian's Library; Iowa Standard, October 19, 1843.
because of his former positions in the city and Church people tended to believe his reports. Thus the former mayor of Nauvoo was most assuredly a major factor in arousing public opinion against the Mormons.

Conspiracy in Nauvoo

John C. Bennett was not the only prominent Mormon to become disenchanted with the Church, its leadership and doctrine. It appears that such men as William Marks, William and Wilson Law and Dr. Robert B. Foster, for example, opposed the principle of plural marriage after it was taught to them in 1842. Having little money, Joseph Smith and his followers were faced with the problem of purchasing land for the Church at extremely high prices causing building lots in "lower" Nauvoo to be very expensive. In order to preserve the financial structure of the Church, these lots had to be sold before the cheaper ones in "upper" Nauvoo were placed on the public market. William Marks, William and Wilson Law and Dr. Foster sold land which they owned in "upper" Nauvoo before Joseph Smith had succeeded in selling all of the Church's property in the lower part of the city causing the city council to meet and publish a proclamation declaring that anyone engaged in land transactions without proper authorization would be excommunicated from the Church. This infringement upon economic freedom, together with their opposition to polygamy and other Church doctrines, prompted the Laws, Fosters, Higbees and about one hundred and ninety-six other disgruntled Mormons to unite in a secret organization whose avowed
purpose was to destroy the Mormon Prophet. 41

As early as January, 1844, a court of inquiry was held at Joseph Smith's store at which William Law stated that he believed the Prophet had instructed members of the Nauvoo police force to kill him. The court, after thorough investigation, found such charges without foundation and concluded William and Wilson Law were traitors seeking to destroy the life of Joseph Smith. 42 Jesse Price testified that on April 8, 1844, William Law "put on his pistols one night and went to Joseph Smith's house." 43 Law told Price that he was determined to blow the Prophet's "infernal brains out" but was unable to shoot him on that occasion.

The conspirators attempted to arouse further antagonism by publishing additional charges against the Prophet accusing him of reviving the Sons of Dan and engaging in adulterous activities. 44 Dr. Robert Foster made a public accusation that Joseph Smith had attempted to seduce his wife as part of the doctrine of plural marriage. To counteract this charge Andrew Lamonoux swore that Dr. Foster was involved with a lady in Nauvoo other than his wife and she was with child. Joseph Smith, Lamonoux said, observing Foster's conduct toward the lady

41Horace Cummings, "Conspiracy in Nauvoo," The Contributor, V (April, 1844).


43Affidavit of Jesse Price before Aaron Johnson, August 1, 1844, ULF.

44Schindler, p. 119.
reproved him and this, in Lamonoux's opinion, was the reason for Foster's opposition to the Church. 45

Following the 1844 April conference the Laws, Fosters, Irving Cole and others organized a church in Nauvoo which sought to win Mormon converts. They also continued to hold secret meetings in which plans were made to destroy the Church and its leaders. 46 Truman Gillette said he was traveling on a riverboat with two men who said William Law was going to help them capture Joseph Smith and take him back to Missouri, and that he was in league with the anti-Mormons in the area who wanted the Prophet dead. 47 William Clayton wrote;

Soon after this period [April 11, 1844] there was considerable excitement raised through the adjoining counties but more especially in this county by some men who apostatized from the Church and threatened destruction and extermination of the whole Church. Amongst the number who apostatized were Wm. and Wilson Law, Robert D. Foster, Francis H. and Chauncy L. Higbee. These men conspired with others who had been citizens of Nauvoo to bring a mob. The names of the principal men in the business were Joseph H. Jackson, Austin Cowles, John M. French, Wm. H. Rolloson, Wm. W. Mean, Sylvester Emmons, Alexander Simpson, John C. Norton and Augustine Spencer. 48

The major purpose of this group was said to be to "cleanse the Church

45Affidavit of Andrew Lamonoux, June 10, 1844, ULF.

46Samuel W. Richards, "Diary of Samuel W. Richards," April, 1844.

47Affidavit of Truman Gillette, June 18, 1844, ULF.

of the false and fallen Prophet." 49

The Prophet was frequently made aware that such individuals were attempting to discredit his name and take his life. Parley P. Pratt, on May 3, 1844, accused Augustine Spencer of publicly charging that the Mormon leader was frequently engaged in drinking, seducing, dancing all night, and that he kept six or seven young females as wives. 50 In reporting the difficulties between the Prophet and Spencer the editor of the Bloomington Herald wrote;

Joe Smith, prophet, and mayor elect, having ordered his police to arrest a man by the name of Spencer, for an assault on his brother in his own house—the residence of his mother also—the accused refused to become a prisoner, alleging it was illegal to arrest without a writ from the mayor. All the parties, however, collected around the Masonic Hall or court house. Joe Smith, mayor, being present ordered the police and the people to take Spencer into custody. The constable having placed hands on him Spencer put himself in a fighting position and was assisted by Dr. Foster and his brother, younger Foster and also James Higby—who said they would not submit to the authority of the Prophet. Joe Smith, put hands too, to assist in taking him, when young Foster took out a pistol and said he would shoot the prophet. 51

The Warsaw Signal reported that trouble was brewing within the Church and mentioned Sidney Rigdon as a possible source of conflict. 52 On April 24, 1844, it reported that anyone who dared to speak or write

49Halford, p. 291.

50Parley P. Pratt to Joseph Smith, May 3, 1844, ULF.

51Bloomington Herald, May 10, 1844.

52Warsaw Signal, May 10, 1844.
a word against the Prophet in Nauvoo was risking his life; that it could be proved that Joseph Smith was commanding some men to murder dissenters, and that the Prophet was the leader of a ring of counterfeiters. 53

Meanwhile, the apostates were making preparations to publish a newspaper in Nauvoo which would publicly express their antagonism to the Mormon Church and its leaders. Regarding their plans Francis Higbee wrote to Thomas Gregg;

The paper I think we will call the Nauvoo Expositor; for it will be fraught with Joe's peculiar and particular mode of legislation; . . . it shall also contain unparalleled and unheard of attempts at seduction. . . . I am well satisfied that he Joseph [Smith] excels Solomon . . . among the women as I am that he is the highest villain that goes unhung. . . . 54

On May 12, 1844, Hyrum Smith received an anonymous letter which was probably from Joseph H. Jackson threatening his life and calling upon him "to make his peace with God, for he would soon have to die." 55 Later Jackson published a book purporting to be an account of his experiences in Nauvoo in which he charged Joseph Smith with all kinds of "corruption" and said that the Prophet told him he "had sent Rockwell to Missouri to shoot ex-governor Boggs." 56

53 Idem.

54F. M. Higbee to Thomas Gregg, May (?), 1844, original in the Hardin Collection of the Chicago Historical Society Library.

55 D. H. C., VI, p. 367.

56 Joseph H. Jackson, The Adventures and Experiences of Joseph H. Jackson (Printed for Publishers, 1846); Humanity to Emma Smith, August 17, 1844, ULF.
The *Warsaw Signal* stated that it had heard and seen enough in the vicinity of Nauvoo to convince anyone that Joseph Smith was not safe either in or out of the city and would not be surprised "to hear of the Prophet's death by violent means in a short time."\(^{57}\)

On June 7, 1844, the first and only issue of the *Nauvoo Expositor* was published wherein Joseph Smith was accused of practicing spiritual wifery, engaging in whoredoms, of abusing political power, of teaching the plurality of gods and of claiming power to seal men up to eternal life. Church leaders were also charged with controlling the politics of the county and indicted the Prophet with being a base seducer, a liar and a murderer.\(^{58}\)

Following the appearance of *The Expositor* the city council met and, after much debate, resolved to destroy the newspaper and its printing press on the grounds that it was a nuisance.\(^{59}\) After receiving orders from the city council, the marshall proceeded to carry them out, which action was followed by rumors that the Mormons had melted the type into bullets and that Joseph Smith was against freedom of the press.\(^{60}\) Many newspapers carried articles expressing their dissatisfaction with

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\(^{57}\) *Warsaw Signal*, May 15, 1844.

\(^{58}\) *Nauvoo Expositor*, June 7, 1844.

\(^{59}\) For a good discussion relative to the legality of the city council's action see Oaks, "The Suppression of the Expositor."

\(^{60}\) *Warsaw Signal*, June 19, 1844.
the "Expositor Affair." The **Burlington Hawkeye** published the following:

We learn by passengers, on the New Brazil, that the new printing office of the Expositor at Nauvoo, was totally demolished on Monday night, by order of Jo. Smith. Will the people countenance such an attack on the freedom of the press? 61

The editor of the **Lee County Democrat** called the whole matter an "outrageous act" which would cause a general rupture in Nauvoo, and the **Niles' National Register** reported that "great excitement was produced at Warsaw by news of the destruction of the Expositor. A handbill was circulated instructing men to gather together in a march on Nauvoo. "There is a large assembly at Carthage making threats of violence," Sidney Rigdon declared, "and they say those responsible for the Expositor's destruction will be hanged." 62

A reward for the destruction of the **Warsaw Signal** was reportedly being offered by Hyrum Smith which promoted much anti-Mormon feeling because of its seeming credibility after the destruction of the **Expositor**. 63

The **Nauvoo Neighbor** published a statement signed by Hyrum Smith stating that he had never offered any such reward nor made threats against the Signal. 64

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61 **Burlington Hawkeye**, June 13, 1844; for similar articles see **Bloomington Herald**, June 14, 1844; **St. Louis Democrat**, June 17, 1844; **Sangamo Journal**, June 20, 1844; **Lee County Democrat**, June 15, 1844; and **Daily National Intelligencer**, June 25, 1844.

62 Sidney Rigdon to Thomas Ford, June 14, 1844, ULF.

63 **Warsaw Signal**, June 19, 1844.

64 **Nauvoo Neighbor**, June 19, 1844.
Warrants were issued for the arrest of Joseph and Hyrum Smith which stated they could be tried before Justice of the Peace Thomas Morrison or some other justice of the peace in the county, and almost immediately the Prophet was tried before the Nauvoo municipal court and "honorably discharged." The constable returned to Carthage stating he had been resisted, and anti-Mormon forces, taking advantage of the circumstances, threatened "terrible vengeance." Their target was the "Morley Settlement" located in southern Hancock County and several smaller communities surrounding the Mormon capital which they burned and plundered. Governor Ford was summoned to Carthage where he instructed Mormons who had been indicted to come there for trial. The story of what happened when they responded to the governor's request has been told so many times it does not bear repeating.

Following the death of Joseph Smith there was some dissension in the Church regarding his successor. Some said he had ordained his son to become the prophet, seer and revelator, while others believed that authority was vested in the quorum of the twelve apostles. Some argued that Sidney Rigdon should lead the Church as a sort of guardian and at least one man claimed possession of a letter, allegedly from


67 Blessing given to Joseph Smith II by Patriarch Joseph Smith, Sr., as remembered by Lucy Mack Smith, *Summer*, 1845, *ULF*. 
Joseph Smith, granting him authority to serve as the Prophet's successor. Brigham Young in August spoke on behalf of leadership being vested in the twelve apostles and most of the members of the Church remained loyal to that quorum. Gentiles, probably hoping that with the death of the Prophet and his brother Mormonism would cease to exist, were largely unconcerned about succession in Mormon leadership. It can thus be seen that dissension within the Church was not a major factor in causing conflict from without after the death of Joseph Smith.

Summary

Former members of the Church were instrumental in arousing antagonism against the Mormons. John C. Bennett, touring the country giving anti-Mormon lectures and publishing an anti-Mormon book, aroused much negative feeling against the Saints as he described Nauvoo as a city composed of adulterers, murderers, thieves and dictators. The fact that he was supposedly revealing "true conditions" in that city did little to help the Church.

Activities of several prominent Mormons in the early part of 1844 were also a major factor in arousing public indignation. The organization of a new church and the publication of a newspaper in the city by these men was thought by many Mormons to threaten their existence. When, by act of the city council, the Nauvoo Expositor was destroyed the citizenry in Hancock County was so aroused that only the death of the Mormon leader seemed capable of placating the public pulse.
In attempting to combat the charges of "dissenters," Church leaders were of necessity forced into the fray and suffered accordingly. Charges and counter-charges partially caused people to accept evil reports being circulated by former Mormons, some apparently believing that the leader of this denomination would have to be destroyed; on June 27, 1844, this goal was achieved.
CHAPTER IX

THE NAUVOO CHARTER, A SOURCE OF CONFLICT

Introduction

In 1839 leaders of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints organized what was later called the Nauvoo Stake. Governed by a presidency and high council, a semblance of social control was imposed on the Saints by the high council which threatened to disfellowship Mormons for doing such things as "knowingly suffering and allowing any animal [subject to their control] to destroy the crops, fruit or plants of the earth belonging to any other person."¹ The leadership of the Church was also in charge of home construction, swamp drainage, the erection of public buildings, and maintaining order in the small community. Many residents believed by 1840 that they would benefit if the community was incorporated under a city charter.

Acting on a petition written by the Saints, the legislature in December, 1840, passed a bill incorporating the city of Nauvoo. The Nauvoo Charter, according to George Miller, embraced powers and privileges so broad that it aroused jealousy among the enemies of the Church

¹Several early documents pertaining to the laws formulated by the leadership of the Church are quoted in full in Bouquet's thesis.
"to the highest degree."²

Ellen Walworth, a student of Mormon history, claims Joseph Smith was able to interpret the charter so as to become almost completely sovereign over his followers which was part of the reason for antagonism against this document on the part of non-members of the Church.³ Alleged Mormon abuses regarding the charter, contends Sorenson, led to much of the anti-Mormon feeling that "began to appear in Illinois following the advent of the Mormons."⁴ Theodore Dickerson, another Mormon history student, claims that to non-Mormons the charter was obviously being used to protect Joseph Smith from arrest and enable Church members "to defy the authorities of the state."⁵ The Nauvoo Charter became the symbol of Mormon defiance of law and order and is frequently considered as one of the leading causes of friction between Mormons and non-Mormons in Hancock County.

The Passage of the Charter

As early as December, 1839, the high council sent a petition to the Illinois state legislature, defining new boundaries for Nauvoo and Commerce and requesting permission to "do all other needful acts

²George Miller to Northern Islander, June 26, 1855. A compilation of the Miller letters is found in the Brigham Young University Library.

³Walworth, p. 13.

⁴Sorenson, p. 125.

⁵Dickerson, p. 15.
relative to those cities" which presumably had reference to a town charter.⁶ According to James L. Kimball, a graduate student of American history, the journals of the senate and house of Illinois reveal no such petition as coming to the floor of either branch of the assembly.⁷

In March, 1840, John T. Stuart sent the Prophet several documents and it is assumed by some historians that these were copies of charters granted to other cities in Illinois. It is further thought that the Prophet, together with other Church leaders, examined these writings and this survey undoubtedly helped them formulate a suitable charter for presentation to the state general assembly.⁸

By October 4, 1840, John C. Bennett reported to a general conference of the Church that a proposed charter for the city of Nauvoo had been drafted.⁹ Following his declaration, the conference voted Joseph Smith, John C. Bennett and Robert B. Thompson "as a committee to lobby the general assembly and urge them to pass the bill to incorporate the city of Nauvoo."¹⁰

The bill was introduced on Friday, November 27, to the senate, read by John Moore and ordered to a "second reading." On motion of

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⁶Kimball, p. 10.

⁷Idem.

⁸Kennedy, p. 204.

⁹Bouquet, pp. 523-524.

¹⁰Ibid., p. 523.
William Richardson, the rules of the senate were dispensed with and the bill read for a second time by its title whereupon it was sent to the judiciary committee. Eight days later it was reported back with an amendment to alter the boundaries of the city. The senate concurred and the bill was engrossed for a third reading. Nineteen days after the bill was introduced it passed the senate and went to the house where its passage was even more expeditious than it had been in the senate. By December 10, 1840, the bill had been read twice by its title and seven days later passed the council of revision and on a voice vote became law. 11

Kennedy argues that "neither Democrats nor Whigs cared to oppose the measure lest the Mormon vote should be driven over to the other side to permanently remain." 12 There was nothing particularly unusual about the Nauvoo Charter as there were similar documents being used in several other Illinois communities. As Kimball demonstrates there was no real reason for either party to oppose the measure. It becomes apparent in the light of Kimball's study, that it was the Mormon interpretation of the charter, not its content, that led to controversy.

Aspects of the Charter that Led to Controversy

One of the most controversial articles in the Nauvoo Charter was

11Kimball, p. 14; see also Snyder, pp. 363-365.

12Kennedy, p. 206.
one authorizing the establishment of a judicial tribunal. The Nauvoo municipal court was the third such city court created by the legislature of Illinois, the other two being Chicago and Alton. However, the court at Nauvoo differed from the others in that one of the municipal judges was to be the elected mayor of the city. This enabled the Mormons to maintain greater control over the judiciary and helped prevent problems from arising as had occurred in Missouri. Also most other city courts had only one judge, whereas in Nauvoo the mayor was judge of the municipal court and each of the aldermen served as associate judges.\textsuperscript{13}

Controversy regarding this court usually revolved around the issuance of writs of \textit{habeas corpus} which almost always enabled the Saints in Nauvoo to seek action from courts sympathetic to the cause of Zion. The Nauvoo court, the Mormons said, had power to grant writs in all cases arising under the ordinances of the city council. But Gentiles countered that Mormons used the municipal court to avoid trials under non-Mormon jurisdiction, which was probably true.\textsuperscript{14}

An ordinance was passed by the city council declaring that the court had jurisdiction in all cases involving arrests made, by any process whatever, in Nauvoo. It appears that legislators intended that the charter's jurisdiction would only apply in cases where imprisonment was a possible consequence because of the breach of some ordinance. But

\begin{footnotesize}
\begin{itemize}
  \item \textsuperscript{13}Emerson, pp. 45-46; \textit{D.H.C.}, V, p. 242.
  \item \textsuperscript{14}Idem.
\end{itemize}
\end{footnotesize}
the Mormons interpreted the charter so as to "authorize the enlargement and extension of the jurisdiction of the court by ordinance." 15

On at least five occasions the Prophet found himself in difficulty with non-Mormons, appeared before the city court, was tried and acquitted. In May, 1844, a group of men charged the Prophet with perjury; and he journeyed to Carthage to stand trial. While there he was informed that should he remain overnight men were going to take his life, which information caused the Mormon leader to return to Nauvoo the same day, only to find that he was accused by his enemies of using the courts to defy the laws of the land. 16 This supposed disregard for law was at least one of the reasons he was arrested again in June and taken to Carthage for trial. Some members of the group that took his life seem to have believed they had to take "matters into their own hands" in order to prevent the Prophet from further flaunting the laws of Illinois. 17

Another polemic article in the charter empowered the city council to organize a municipal militia. Shortly after the passage of the charter, a body of independent military men called the Nauvoo Legion was

15Ford, p. 267.

16D.H.C., VI, p. 412.

17Lee County Democrat, September 2, 1843; Josiah Lambourn to Brigham Young, January 28, 1845, ULF; Bloomington Herald, July 5, 1844; William Clayton, "Journal of William Clayton," p. 52; James Gregg to unnamed brother, June 28, 1844, Chicago Historical Society Library; and Illinois State Register, July 5, 1844.
founded. Encouraged and supported by the state, militia's were usually organized on a county basis.\footnote{Oliver B. Huntington, "Diary of Oliver B. Huntington," p. 11.} Other citizens of the county were urged by the bylaws of the Nauvoo Legion to join that organization but in reality it was almost entirely supported and composed of Mormons.

A provision in the charter allowing Nauvoo the privilege of establishing a legion aroused the ire of many of the people in Illinois. Because of the large number of recruits (exaggerated reports said the legion had five thousand members), the Saints were frequently accused of organizing an army\footnote{Quincy Whig, April 21, 1841; Lee County Democrat, May 14, 1842; Hawkeye and Iowa Patriot, April 15, 1841. These newspapers, in giving the number of men serving in the Legion, vary from 650-5,000.}. Some people argued that the Mormons were going to attack Mexico and Texas and then establish an independent state, and others accused the Church of building a military force to attack the United States. There is no evidence to support these rumors but each military parade seems to have created greater anxiety on the part of the general public\footnote{Chillicothe Intelligencer (Illinois), July 1, 1843; The Freeman, July 23, 1842; and Lee County Democrat, May 14, 1842.}.

The Legion, with its showy uniforms, good equipment, and frequent displays of power, was often cited as "proof of the darkest and deepest plots to which imagination could give creation."\footnote{Kennedy, p. 212.} Many people who observed the "Mormon Military Machine" went away asking such
questions as "What does all this mean?" "Why the exact discipline of the Mormon corps?" "Do they intend to conquer Missouri, Illinois, Mexico?"

One man said, "Joseph Smith is a noble-looking fellow, a Mahomet every inch of him, and a western empire is certain." On November 22, 1840, the Bloomington Herald published an article regarding the Legion.

From citizens of Montrose, we learned that they paraded for military training weekly, when they are taken through all the exercises in the use of arms. Their purposes for training are not opening avowed, but those who have had much intercourse with them are of the opinion that it is to avenge themselves on Missouri, so soon as their increasing strength will warrant a hope for success. Let their object be what it may, they cannot live long in peace with the neighboring country, it is certain that our southern neighbors may anticipate trouble with them. Their numbers already give them an impudence that free men cannot long quietly submit to and it is increasing to a remarkable degree.

It was also rumored that the Mormons were storing large quantities of ammunition and powder in Nauvoo for the purpose of over-awing the citizens of Hancock County. Some reported that the Nauvoo Temple was in reality a fort designed to protect the Saints.

The Mormon attitude regarding the Legion seems to have increased the public's feeling against that organization. In an editorial published

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22 Neff, p. 48; Sangamo Journal, May 8, 1842.

23 Bloomington Herald, November 20, 1840.

in the *Times and Seasons* the Prophet wrote;

The Nauvoo Legion, embraces all our military power, and will enable us to perform our military duty by ourselves, and thus afford us the power, and privilege of avoiding one of the most fruitful sources of strife, oppression, and collision with the world. It will enable us to show our attachment to the state and nation as a people. 25

Parley P. Pratt, in the *Millennial Star* predicted that the Legion would be "fifty thousand strong" and that it was led by ambitious and talented officers. 26 Such statements, coupled with increased immigration to Nauvoo, tended to alarm many people. Even the *Daily National Intelligencer* in Washington, D. C., reported that Joseph Smith was dispatching companies in "all directions under orders to rid the world of some of his disaffected followers." 27 This statement was followed by a report on recent immigration to Nauvoo and Mormon missionary activity in Pennsylvania, Connecticut and Massachusetts. Similar articles appeared in the same newspaper on September 27, 1842, and on July 10, 1843. The *Niles' National Register* said the Mormons were cultivating thousands of acres of land around Nauvoo and the Nauvoo Legion was growing; that the city had four or five thousand men who were "thoroughly disciplined and well acquainted with the use of artillery," and that they "drilled frequently." 28


26 *Millennial Star*, September, 1842.

27 *Daily National Intelligencer*, June 10, 1844.

28 *Niles' National Register*, December 9, 1843.
In the spring of 1841, the city council passed an ordinance requiring all men between the ages of 18 and 25 to serve in the Legion. The editor of the Sangamo Journal asked: "What would be thought if the Baptists, Methodists, Presbyterians, or Episcopalians of this state had military organizations?" Apparently many people in areas surrounding Nauvoo were becoming even more apprehensive regarding Mormon military activities.

On the eleventh anniversary of the Church, Hosea Stout read a poem about the Nauvoo Legion which reflected to some extent what could be called the Mormon attitude toward the troops. Stout wrote in one of its stanzas,

Now should our foes be gathered to drive us from our lands,
Or try to thwart our purposes, to break the Lord's commands,
The day they come against us, as they before did do,
They'll feel the weight and power of the Legion of Nauvoo.

By 1842 some people accused the Prophet of "building a military church like Mohammed of old," and said he "was going to spread the gospel with his sword." The existence of this efficient militia, captained by a religious leader, that "was to be a bulwark to the city and a protection to the Saints, was transformed by their enemies into an

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29 Hawkeye and Iowa Patriot, March 18, 1841.
30 Sangamo Journal, June 3, 1842.
31 "Journal History," April 6, 1841.
32 Logansport Telegraph (Illinois), July 30, 1842.
occasion of offense and an excuse for assailing them." 33

Parley P. Pratt argued that the Legion provided a

peculiar advantage to the Saints . . . it affords that security
and protection against lawless violence which has been so
much needed of late; but which our people could seldom enjoy
until thus organized, they have at length become able to
protect themselves . . . Nauvoo then, is the nucleus of a
glorious dominion of universal liberty, peace, and plenty;
it is an organization of that government of which there shall
be no end. 34

At least some of the Saints seem to have believed that the advantages of
having a legion in time of trouble far outweighed the disadvantages.

There were several purposes which the Legion fulfilled; forty of
its men served as a special bodyguard to Joseph Smith; members fre-
quently did other "police work" in Nauvoo; and it was once mustered to
remove a grog shop that had been established within the city limits. 35

As the Legion grew in numbers and power, Joseph Smith was
frequently referred to by non-Mormons as "a military prophet." 36
Many reports accusing him of having "intentions of conquest" appeared
in the nation's newspapers. As hostilities between Mormons and Gen-
tiles increased the Nauvoo Legion became the focal point of even more
bitter controversy. "In equipment, discipline, and training it was

33 Roberts, *Rise and Fall of Nauvoo*, pp. 88-89.
34 Millennial Star, August, 1842.
36 Tullidge, p. 309.
recognized as a formidable military machine.\textsuperscript{37} On at least one occasion it was reported that the Legion had been called out and had killed some twenty or thirty non-Mormons and wounded several others. The report further said "the Legion is still under arms and is bidding defiance to all authority."\textsuperscript{38}

Because it was rumored that a civil war was about to commence, in June, 1844, Joseph Smith declared martial law in Nauvoo; and the Legion prepared to fight. The Prophet and his followers, one editor declared, "would fight until the last drop of blood because they had enthusiasm equal to that of Mahomet in Arabia."\textsuperscript{39}

Apparently believing it was folly to attempt to defy the whole state of Illinois, Joseph Smith commanded members of the Legion to surrender their arms. A few Mormons disobeyed the Prophet's orders and a number of weapons were concealed in a nearby cornfield.\textsuperscript{40} Open conflict was avoided but the Prophet was arrested and taken to Carthage where he was assassinated. Some members of the Church believed it was only the power of the Nauvoo Legion that saved Nauvoo from destruction following the death of Joseph and Hyrum Smith, because members procured the buried weapons and dispersed a mob.\textsuperscript{41}

\textsuperscript{37} Buckingham, p. 183.

\textsuperscript{38} \textit{Quincy Herald}, August 25, 1842.

\textsuperscript{39} \textit{Lee County Democrat}, June 22, 1844.

\textsuperscript{40} \textit{Idem}.

\textsuperscript{41} Samuel W. Richards, "Diary of Samuel W. Richards," June 21 and 30, 1844.
Miscellaneous Sources of Conflict

There were other sources of agitation relative to the Nauvoo Charter. Like many other public documents, the charter developed as it was used. For example, in order to facilitate the recording of deeds, the city council passed a law authorizing the establishment of a recorder's office in Nauvoo which aroused resentment on the part of at least some people who lived in the county seat, Carthage. They charged that the Mormons were doing something illegal; and, therefore, they sought to record deeds in their own city.

The fact that the city council was authorized to issue marriage licenses in Nauvoo was combined with rumors regarding peculiar Mormon marriage customs which aroused suspicions to such a degree that it was alleged the Mormons had passed the act in order to camouflage their strange marital behavior.

The Development of Antagonism with Respect to the Nauvoo Charter

Antagonism toward the Nauvoo Charter developed, and a document that was intended to help the Latter-day Saints became the focal point of resentment to the Church and its leaders. The Prophet's views regarding this document were clearly expressed in a report given at the April, 1841, general conference. The Mormon leader said that he had "concocted it [the Nauvoo Charter] for the salvation of the Church and on principles so broad that every honest man might dwell secure under
its protection without distinction of sect or party."\(^{42}\) He could perhaps have added, "and for my own salvation as well," because on several occasions in the next three years writs were sworn out against him on the basis of an "old requisition from Missouri."\(^{43}\) The city court quickly issued counter writs allowing the Prophet to be tried before the municipal court, this was done, and he was soon set free.

By July, 1842, the newspapers reported the Prophet was defying by use of the Nauvoo Charter, the laws of the legally constituted authorities.\(^{44}\) The editor of the *Sangamo Journal* said the Mormons had made "Nauvoo a state and that they would soon govern the United States."\(^{45}\) In August, 1842, a reporter of the *Quincy Whig* wrote that Governor Ford was bound and "determined to arrest the Mormon Prophet even if it took 1,000 men to do so."\(^{46}\) People in Illinois who read these newspapers must have believed the Nauvoo Charter was being used by the Mormons in an attempt to flaunt the laws of the land.

William V. Pooley, in his doctoral dissertation, argues that the power vested in the charter "arouse[s] jealousy in the minds of the

\(^ {42}\) *D. H. C.*, IV, p. 249; *Bouquet*, p. 531; *Sangamo Journal*, July 8, 1842.

\(^ {43}\) *Charleston Courier* (South Carolina), July 3, 1842.

\(^ {44}\) *The Wasp*, July 27, 1842.

\(^ {45}\) *Quincy Whig*, August 13, 1842.

citizens in counties surrounding Nauvoo causing a "much more perplexing political problem to both parties because the Nauvoo Charter enabled them [the Mormons] to be more independent than they had been in Missouri." The Saints, at first, used their new power wisely but when they believed the Missourians were attempting to extradite their Prophet so they could murder him, they used every device at their disposal to thwart these attempts. Their efforts were interpreted by many of Illinois citizens as ventures in circumventing the law. Governor Ford, supposedly in response to public pressure, in his inaugural address on December 8, 1842, suggested that the "charter of Nauvoo be modified so as to eliminate the special privileges which were arousing so much opposition." On the following day James M. Davis of Bond County introduced a resolution in the house, "urging the repeal of the law incorporating the city of Nauvoo." However, the Mormons had enough political power to thwart this attempt to abolish their charter.

Church members argued that they only expected to be treated as other citizens in Illinois, yet almost everything they did was construed as being a gross misuse of power. In commenting on the governor's

47 Idem.

48 Buckingham, p. 184; as has been pointed out earlier in this chapter, the Nauvoo Charter did not contain sections providing for special privileges, yet people continued to charge that it was a unique document, and the fact that they held such beliefs was a factor in arousing antagonism, even though such beliefs were not based on facts.

49 The Wasp, December 24, 1842.

50 Idem.
inaugural address regarding the repeal or modification of the Nauvoo Charter, the editor of the Mormon Wasp said that it "seemed strange to him why such a feverish excitement and such jealousy should exist in the minds of the community pertaining to the Mormons as a people." 51 He claimed that the people in the county were "receiving false information about the Mormons because of the slanders appearing in the newspapers of the state." 52

The Iowa City Standard carried a story about the Nauvoo Charter in which the following was written;

Much feeling exists upon the subject of the extraordinary powers granted to the Mormons; and a strong effort is on foot to bring about the repeal of the Nauvoo Charter; but the brother of Joe Smith who is a member of the House, rehearsed to the Locofo [Democrats] the great help they have derived from Mormon votes, and it is thought the charter will be sustained. 53

This newspaper's prediction proved to be accurate and it was not until January, 1845, that enough support could be mustered to repeal the Charter.

Stories continued to appear in the state's newspapers charging the Mormons with using the charter "to serve their own ends and to help them defy the laws of the land." 54 For example, one authority said the reason the document was under "attack" was because Joseph Smith, as

51Idem.

52Idem.

53Iowa City Standard, December 29, 1842.

54Bloomington Herald, October 21, 1842.
mayor of Nauvoo, helped make the laws, then as executive he enforced them and as head of the municipal court he placed on these laws his own interpretation.\textsuperscript{55} This was thought by many to violate the separation of powers doctrine that was an important part of the federal Constitution.

In 1843 there was an attempt on the part of some of the state's politicians to repeal the Nauvoo Charter. This was led by a Mr. Waters who reported that people "for two hundred miles around Nauvoo were interested in the city and its people."\textsuperscript{56} The editor of the \textit{The Wasp} argued that the citizens of Nauvoo could attend to their own business without interference from outsiders. A petition was circulated calling for repeal of the charter, but in spite of moderate public pressure the legislature refused.\textsuperscript{57}

Early in 1843 another attempt was made to take Joseph Smith to Missouri. He was tried and acquitted before the Nauvoo municipal court and once again the newspapers contained many stories charging the Mormon Prophet with using the Nauvoo Charter to defy the laws of the land. At least one writer said the non-Mormons were so concerned that they held a meeting in which it was "resolved to refuse to obey the officers elected by the Mormons, and determined to avenge with blood any assaults made upon the citizens by the Mormons."\textsuperscript{58}

\textsuperscript{55}Buckington, p. 183.

\textsuperscript{56}\textit{The Wasp}, February 8, 1843.

\textsuperscript{57}\textit{Illinois Republican}, March 11, 1843.

\textsuperscript{58}\textit{Daily National Intelligencer}, September 23, 1843.
Partly because of this meeting the city council of Nauvoo passed an ordinance making it illegal for anyone to enter Nauvoo "with writs for the arrest of Joseph Smith on the old Missouri Charges."\(^{59}\) Many Gentiles charged that this was a direct defiance of law and some of the citizens in surrounding counties resolved to assist Missouri officials in delivering Joseph Smith.\(^{60}\) The Prophet at this time wrote,

Our enemies say our charter and writs of habeas corpus are worth nothing. We say they came from the highest authority in the state, and we will hold to them. They cannot be disannulled or taken away.\(^{61}\)

In opposition to the alleged arbitrary and unconstitutional powers exercised by the Nauvoo city council, anti-Mormons continued to agitate for the complete repeal of the Nauvoo Charter. They demanded that the "special privileges" be abolished and the Mormons placed on the same level with other citizens.\(^{62}\) Some lawyers argued that the powers granted to Nauvoo were unconstitutional, while the Mormons asserted that the charter was legal and that even the state legislature did not have power to repeal it.\(^{63}\) Politicians themselves were divided regarding the best course to pursue relative to that document. One party contended

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\(^{59}\)Original copy of this ordinance is in the ULF; see also Wilford Woodruff, "Journal of Wilford Woodruff," December 8, 1843.

\(^{60}\)Niles’ National Register, September 30, 1843.


\(^{62}\)Dickerson, p. 15.

\(^{63}\)Berry, p. 92.
violently for its repeal and the orther urged that it was not in itself
objectionable and that repeal would be attended with no beneficial effect.
The Democrats were of the opinion that it was the way the Saints applied
the Charter that was causing most of the ill feeling against it and urged
that the Mormons "be instructed in the proper use of that document."\(^{64}\)

Many non-Mormons began to agitate for the removal of the Mormons
from the state, arguing that they were disturbing the peace and should be
driven out.\(^{65}\) Following the deaths of Joseph and Hyrum Smith the legis-
lature seriously considered the matter of repealing the Nauvoo Charter.
By December 20, 1844, a bill for its repeal had passed the senate and
was on its way to the house.\(^{66}\) Upon hearing of this bill, Brigham Young
wrote to his brother Phineas,

The senate and house of representatives for the state
of Illinois have assembled in council in the city of Spring-
field and have striven to take away our charter . . . if
the charters are repealed we shall appeal right off to the
higher courts until it goes to the federal court of the
United States before we give it up and by the time it
passes the last court we tried we shall have accomplished
all that the Lord decrees for this place.\(^{67}\)

In February of 1845 the repeal of the charter was a reality.\(^{68}\) In a
letter to Orson Spencer, Almon Babbitt said;

\(^{64}\) Warsaw Signal, February 21, 1844.

\(^{65}\) Thomas Ford to the Mormons, February 14, 1844, ULF.

\(^{66}\) Ottawa Free Trader (Illinois), December 27, 1844.

\(^{67}\) Brigham Young to Phineas Young, January 21, 1845, ULF.

\(^{68}\) Missouri Reporter, February 12, 1845.
Distant nations are making careful inquisition to know whether there is sufficient virtue in our general state government to preserve their plighted faith inviolable. The state of Illinois may repudiate and incur disdane of foreigners for failure to pay some dollars and cents worthy due. 69

Babbitt went on to say it was a shame that the Nauvoo Charter had been repealed and the valuable privileges of the Saints revoked. Brigham Young commented on the subject saying that a loyal group of citizens had been deprived of their lawful rights and a disfranchised people would still maintain "their right to vote until the blood of their best men was shed with impunity." 70

Even after the charter was repealed, the Nauvoo Legion continued to be a factor in arousing antagonism. Governor Ford asked Brigham Young to muster this organization and help preserve peace in Hancock County, which President Young refused to do, stating that the result would be a civil war that would undoubtedly end in a blood bath. After this time, (1845-46) the Legion was only used to protect citizens in Nauvoo and in defending the city. 71

With the charter repealed, acts of violence against them on the increase, and their Prophet dead, the Saints left Illinois and made their

69 Almon Babbitt to Orson Spencer, December 14, 1844, ULF.

70 Brigham Young to Thomas L. Drew, April 30, 1845, ULF.

71 Thomas Ford to Messrs. Walton & Webber, August 30, 1844, Hardin Collection, Chicago Historical Library.
way to the Great Basin. 72

CHAPTER X

LAWLESSNESS

Introduction

In frontier regions people tended to join together and cooperate for a common end without the intervention of governmental officials. 1 Hence, many sections of the country had "judge lynch courts," vigilante committees, and squatters' claim associations. 2 At least one writer has called the frontier a "strange world, indeed, where there was almost a complete lack of respect for properly constituted authorities." 3

Illinois had its share of lawlessness and people who sometimes "took the law into their own hands;" and Nauvoo, like many other growing, newly settled regions, attracted ruffians, thieves, counterfeitors, and murderers. Among a number of Gentiles a feeling developed that this city was the headquarters of nearly all the marauders who were

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1Harr, p. 51.

2Two of the best sources regarding the activity of lawyers and the status of the legal profession in the southwest are Joseph G. Baldwin, Flush Times in Alabama and Mississippi: A Series of Sketches (New York: Appleton and Company, 1823); G. L. Prentiss, A Memoir of S. S. Prentiss (New York: Charles Scribner, 1885). These books also describe lawlessness on the frontier.

3Harr, p. 54.
preying upon the country and that leaders of the Church were "privy to their depredations." 4

While the Mormons were rapidly increasing in numbers and power, the surrounding country was suffering severely from a succession of robberies. Stock of every description and goods of all kinds were constantly being stolen. Accused offenders were frequently tracked in the direction of Nauvoo; and sometime, though rarely, the property was recovered. But the arrest of the perpetrators was even more rare. If an arrest was made in Nauvoo the accused, people said, was generally released by the city court. 5

Crimes Supposedly Committed by Mormons

Almost as soon as they arrived in Illinois, Mormons were accused of embarking on a life of crime. Citizens in Jacksonville, for example, discovered in 1840 that rails had been stripped from a portion of the railroad between Jacksonville and Meridosis. A Mormon elder, Charles Chrisman, was convicted of the crime; and it was said Church leaders had "instigated the whole affair." 6 In the vicinity of Montebello, Mormons were accused by Patrick Doyle, M. Gray, and B. Willis of stealing items valued at $2,435.74. 7

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4 Bonney, pp. 18-22.
5 Idem.
6 Crider, p. 186.
7 Warsaw Signal, January 22, 1845.
In June, 1840, two men referred to in the newspapers as Wilson and Steward had three boxes of cotton yarn and eight kegs of nails, among other things, consigned to them. These goods were left on the landing at Tully, Missouri. One night the nails were rolled into the river and the boxes of yarn, together with a skiff belonging to a Captain Nelson, stolen. A short time afterwards, J. M. Strother missed a valuable chest of carpenter tools and in close succession eight barrels of salt, one of sugar, five lots of carpenter's tools, a warehouse was rifled of its contents, two farms plundered and several horses stolen from different people in the county.

Corroborating evidence, Gentiles said, justified the belief that Mormons had stolen all of the goods mentioned above and in reporting the incident a reporter wrote;

We were shocked to find that men had become so degraded, under the cloak and garb of religion, that they had committed burglary, larceny, and God knows how many crimes, to satiate the Christian [?] of their most holy Prophet.  

Two Mormons believed responsible for at least some of the thefts were kidnapped, taken to Missouri and badly beaten, yet were never convicted of any crime. In "righteous indignation," the Saints held a public meeting and denounced this action.  

Because of alleged Mormon thievery, Reverend Calvin Watersbury contended New England immigrants were no longer settling in Illinois.

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8Quincy Whig, July 25, 1840.

9Iowa News, August 4, 1840.
The Reverend B. F. Morris wrote to Milton Badger charging that Mormonism was exerting a great and pernicious influence in the county. Another minister told his congregation that "Nauvoo is a perfect sink of debauchery and every species of abomination live there." Varicus acts of injustice and tyranny incensed the Illinois community, says Samuel S. Schmucker, against the Mormons and ultimately led to furious hostilities. Anti-Mormons were especially prone to believe the multitude of stories circulating regarding Mormon lawlessness.

In a letter to Governor Boggs of Missouri, nine citizens of Illinois charged the Prophet with teaching his followers that it was proper to steal from the Missourians and that he would even recommend it until they had recovered as much as they lost which amounted to $300,000.

The Prophet vigorously replied to the allegation:

I disfellowship the perpetrators of all such abominations—stealing and etc. they are devils and not saints, totally unfit for the society of Christians or men. It is true that some professing to be Latter Day Saints have taught such vile heresies, but all are not Israel that are of Israel; and I wish it to be distinctly understood in all coming time, that the Church over which I preside will ever set its brows like

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14Idem.
brass, and its face like steel, against all such abominable
acts of vilainy and crime.15

Another individual argued that the whole Mormon people should not be
blamed for the acts of one or two members of that organization and
contended that no one had proved that the Mormons had stolen any of
the articles mentioned in the other newspapers. In closing the writer
stated, "there may be bad men among the Mormons--and what society
is there not?"16

One "respected" settler near Fountain Green, Illinois, signed an
affidavit that bogus cattle raids "were used by those performing the deed
in an attempt to convince their neighbors that the Mormons were trying
to steal their cattle."17 In support of this allegation, Jacob Hamblin
said, "I soon learned to discriminate between the different kinds of
people who had gathered at Nauvoo... some... were living the lives
of Saints while others were full of deceit and were stumbling blocks in
the way of those striving to do right."18 Other Mormons spoke "won-
deringly of the numerous cattle and other stock that had a habit of wan-
dering from the surrounding areas into the city."19

15 The Wasp, July 31, 1840.
16 Quincy Whig, July 25, 1840.
17 Affidavit found in Salisbury, p. 285.
19 Ibid., p. 134.
Theft became so frequent and unpleasant incidents involving larceny so commonplace that many people believed the charges against the Mormons could not be entirely disregarded.\textsuperscript{20} At least one newspaper reported that "scattered bands of Saints had occasioned much difficulty with their neighbors," and another declared that "mobs are gathering in the vicinity of Shelby because of Mormon lawlessness."\textsuperscript{21} Bucky, a popular non-Mormon poet, wrote:

\begin{verbatim}
Repen, Repent, there still is time--
And add no more dark crime to crime--
But think how mighty and sublime
thy calling first--
And in black sackcloth bow thee down
low in the dust--

And put away far from thy heart,
Each wicked, sensual, sinful art;
And from the truth no more depart
long as you live--
But stop and make another start,
and I'll forgive.

If no, your dark deed in Nauvoo,
As well as in Missouri too--
Like Hamlet's ghost shall rise to view
with old white hat--
Then tremble tyrant, for but a few
will sanction that.\textsuperscript{22}
\end{verbatim}

During the summer of 1841, several newspapers carried stories in which it was said the Mormons suffered from an absence of all moral


\textsuperscript{21}Niles' National Register, July 20, 1839; Alton Commercial Gazette, June 18, 1839.

\textsuperscript{22}Warsaw Signal, April 25, 1844.
and religious principles and had become so obnoxious to the Gentiles that justice should be meted out against them. Wilford Woodruff reported that citizens in Illinois appeared "much more opposed against the Saints, at the present time than ever before since the rise of the Church." He further wrote:

It seeming as though all earth & Hell are making one united effort to overthrow the church by delving the earth in lies. Publick [sic] meetings are held against us and newspapers are constantly publishing falsehoods against us of the blackest jig until one is ready to conclude the day had come when men are left to believe a lie that they might be damned.

Since the horses of a man named Kilbourne, who was under examination on a charge of conspiracy against the Saints, were poisoned in September, 1841, this act was attributed to Mormons. One newspaper reporting the incident stated that great excitement prevailed and "serious consequences were apprehended."

In November, 1841, a "nest of thieves" claiming to be Mormons were uncovered at Ramus, Hancock County. After being captured one of the leaders of this band said, "Joseph Smith sustained them in their conduct as long as their stealing was practiced upon the Gentiles."

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23 Niles' National Register, July 3, 1841.


25 Idem.

26 Daily Missouri Republican, July 3, 1841.

In an energetic denial, writing on behalf of the first presidency, Joseph Smith replied,

Whereas it hath been intimated to me by persons of credibility, that there are persons in the surrounding country, who profess to be members of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints who have been using their influence and endeavors to instill into the minds of good and worthy citizens in the state of Illinois and the adjoining states that the First Presidency, and others in authority and high standing in said church, do sanction an approbate the members of said church in stealing property . . . I caution the unwary, who belong to the aforesaid church and all other persons, against being duped or led into any act or scheme which may endanger their character, lives or property, or bring reproach upon the church; and I certify that I hold my person and property ready to support the laws of the land, in the detection of any person or persons who may commit any breach of the same. 28

Yet because of alleged Mormon thievery, Gentiles warned members of the Church living in outlying areas that they would be mobbed, killed, or driven from the land. Church leaders fearful for their safety attempted, early in 1844, to move all of the Saints into Nauvoo where they could be protected and cared for in case of a general attack. But even within the Mormon capital there was considerable fear that the Saints would be unable to defend themselves. It was said that because of this fear Joseph Smith had a secret passage leading from his house, through the doors of a closet to a stairway and underground to a stable across the street so he could escape on horseback in case of a sudden emergency. 29

28 The Wasp, March 29, 1843.

29 J. M. Reid, Sketches and Anecdotes of the Old Settlers and New Comers (Keokuk, Iowa: R. B. Ogden, 1876), pp. 33-34.
The editor of The Wasp reported that the public press was daily teaming with slanders, foul calumnies, and base misrepresentations and that every effort was being made by base and unprincipled men to turn the tide of popular opinion against the members of the Church. Spies were sent into the city in an attempt "to discover new crimes and capture criminals," usually meaning Joseph Smith or other Church leaders.

In February, 1844, T. W. Nixon reported that he had attended an anti-Mormon meeting in Carthage "and the people there were all excited regarding the Church." During this meeting, he added, he stood up and defended the Prophet and the Church but concluded that his defense fell upon deaf ears. Resolutions were passed declaring that the Mormons should be driven from the state because of "their utter disregard for the law." The Warsaw Message published the resolutions, then editorialized as follows:

Admit it please, that they are a band of knaves and robbers that is not decisive that all who reside at Nauvoo are deserving of punishment.

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30 The Wasp, April 16, 1842.

31 Reports continued to circulate that the Mormons were thieves and rogues, and Governor Ford claimed these allegations were believed by vast numbers of people. Ford, pp. 268-269.

32 T. W. Nixon to Brigham Young, February 14, 1844, ULF.

33 Illinois Statesman, January 15, 1844.

34 Warsaw Message, January 31, 1844.
Another reporter wrote in the same newspaper, "we have every reason to look upon them as a band of knaves, or highway robbers, who are willing to hazard their lives to carry out what are called Jo's hellish designs."  

If the Mormons wanted to live in peace in Hancock County, according to the _Warsaw Signal_, they would have to cease "insulting the laws, desecrating public morals and substituting their own laws for the laws of the state."  

Joseph Smith, according to the editor, was an individual beneath contempt because he was a leader of an organized band of rogues, counterfeitters and robbers.  

Other writers charged that when officers of the law went to Nauvoo in search of thieves or murderers, the Prophet Joseph refused to extradite them.  

And George Davis wrote;  

Although requisition upon requisition was made by the executive of Missouri upon the executive of Illinois for the delivery of Joe Smith for trial, by the aid of his political and monied influence he was always successful in escaping and evading the ends of Justice.  

Allen W. Morley, a Mormon, swore that he was told by a group of men "that they would take Joseph Smith by law if they could or if the Governor would not grant a writ they would take him anyhow and if the people in

35 Idem.  
36 _Warsaw Signal_, February 28, 1844.  
37 _Ibid._, March 6, 1844.  
38 _Ibid._, May 22, 1844.  
39 Davis, p. 4.
Nauvoo would not give him up they would seize the entire city. 40

In the spring of 1844 rumors spread that there was a species of counterfeit money circulating in the vicinity of Hancock County. 41 It was reported that Joseph Smith was the head of this nefarious business operation. Writing to a Mrs. Powers who lived in Hampton Rock Island, Robert Foster said:

I drop you this line to inform you of a matter that I wish you to keep in part a secret ... the character of Eaton one of Joseph Smith's particular friends and associates in making and rending spurious coin and counterfeit bills is a married man with a wife and several children ... he has been in the business several years and Smith and the twelve are his confederates in this iniquity at Nauvoo this is a certain fact. 42

Theorin Terrill on June 4, 1844, was arrested with twelve counterfeit half dollars in his possession. He said that he had received the money from George Reader, a man whom he had lived with previously. Reader, according to the boy, had an affidavit signed by Joseph Smith in his possession indicating he was a Mormon. 43

In 1845 Charles Ivins was accused by the Mormons of working in Carthage to procure indictments against the Mormon leaders for

40 Affidavit of Allen W. Morley given before Justice of the Peace Aaron Johnson, June 20, 1844, ULF.

41 Warsaw Signal, May 29, 1844.

42 R. D. Foster to Mrs. Powers, September 23, 1844, ULF.

43 Warsaw Signal, June 5, 1844.
counterfeiting money in Nauvoo. Though Ivins denied that he was involved in such activity, warrants were soon issued for the arrest of Brigham Young, Joseph Smith's successor, on the above mentioned charge. Officers arrived in Nauvoo the winter of 1846 to arrest Brigham Young, but were unable to find the new Mormon prophet. His fear that if taken to Carthage he would be dealt with as had Joseph Smith was one reason he left for the west in February of that year.  

In later years writing about his experiences in Nauvoo, Franklin D. Richards said:

They [the mob] laid every manner of evil to us. We were ever so wicked and abominable. They would steal horses and run off with them and lay it to our people. Put up jobs in order to find something against us with the inclination of destroying us or drive us away.

With the departure of Brigham Young and the migration of the Mormons from Nauvoo, charges of theft, counterfeiting, and other crimes decreased; and the only report regarding the Mormons in 1847 was that a member was lynched in an Illinois town by a group of ruffians.

44 Charles Ivins to Brigham Young, November 7, 1844, ULF.

45 Idem.

46 Narrative of Franklin D. Richards, found in the Bancroft Library, Berkeley, California. Douglas Knox, on July 25, 1844, reported that a group of lawless ladies were operating in Nauvoo putting tar and feathers on undesirables who came into the city. Douglas Knox to Willard Richards, July 25, 1844, ULF.

47 Missouri Reporter, February 5, 1847.
The Attempted Assassination of Ex-Governor Lilburn W. Boggs

The assault on ex-governor Boggs of Missouri was generally believed to be another example of Mormon disregard for law. Porter Rockwell was accused of performing the deed and Joseph Smith with instigating the entire affair. In February, 1842, Porter Rockwell left Nauvoo with his family and traveled, under an assumed name to Independence, Missouri. While waiting for his wife to give birth to their fourth child, he secured employment under the pseudonym of Brown. Living in that same city just a few blocks from the downtown square, was ex-governor Lilburn W. Boggs. About nine o'clock in his South Pleasant Street home on the evening of May 6, 1842, someone attempted to take his life. Bogg's brother, a medical doctor, was summoned by the grief stricken family and after a careful examination announced that the ex-governor would probably not survive. The next morning citizens of Independence held a meeting at the courthouse and adopted measures for securing the capture of the assassin. A reward of $500 was offered for his apprehension and the evening newspapers reported that the killer would soon be seized because many people had seen him leave town. Upon hearing of the assassination attempt the next morning Porter Rockwell left Independence and traveled to Nauvoo. Shortly after arriving there he was, together with Joseph Smith, implicated in the attack.  

48Schindler, p. 74.

John C. Bennett, just expelled from the Church because of immoral conduct, charged in an article published in several newspapers that Joseph Smith had sent Rockwell to Missouri with orders to kill Boggs. Following Bennett's lead many of the country's newspapers published articles accusing the Mormon Prophet of instigating the affair. For example, a reporter in the *Quincy Whig* wrote:

One report of which throws the crime upon the Mormons—for the fact, we suppose, that Mr. Boggs was the governor at the time, and no small degree instrumental in driving them from the state. Smith too, the Mormon prophet, was we understand, prophesying a year or so ago, his death by violent means.\(^5^0\)

The *Native American Bulletin* and *The Freeman* also published the accusations of Bennett stating that they seemed to be true.\(^5^1\) The editor of the *Iowa Hawkeye* stated that he was certain a Mormon had shot Boggs;\(^5^2\) and the *Cincinnati Chronicler* reported,

Mr. Ford informs us that it is the general opinion among the Mormons that Rockwell was the person who shot Gov. Boggs, and many of them stated if Rockwell did commit the deed, it was at the instigation or with the knowledge of Smith. He further informs us that Gov. Carlin is about to remove the state's arms from Nauvoo.\(^5^3\)

In a work published in 1844, James H. Hunt asserted that Joseph Smith

\(^5^0\) *Quincy Whig*, May 21, 1842.

\(^5^1\) *Native American Bulletin*, July 14, 1842; *The Freeman*, July 23, 1842.

\(^5^2\) *Iowa Hawkeye*, May 26, 1842.

\(^5^3\) *Cincinnati Chronicler*, August 27, 1842.
gave Porter Rockwell $50.00 and a wagon to assassinate Boggs. 54

In an attempt to counteract these charges Joseph Smith sent a letter to several Illinois newspapers in which he said;

Dear Sir: In your paper [Quincy Whig] of the 21st you have done me manifest injustice in ascribing to me a prediction of the demise of Lilburn W. Boggs, Esq. Ex-Governor of Missouri, by violent hands. Boggs was a candidate for the state senate, and I presume fell by the hands of a political opponent, with his hands and face dripping with blood of murder; but he died not through my instrumentality. My hands are clean and my heart pure, from the blood of all men. 55

In response to this letter the Quincy Whig published the following from the pen of George M. Hinkle;

Come! Come! Joe, that tale in the Herald and Whig denying your having prophesied the violent death of Boggs won't do, too many people heared [sic] you yourself among the rest. 56

Traveling to Missouri, John C. Bennett urged the new recovering Lilburn W. Boggs to swear out a warrant for the arrest of Joseph Smith and Porter Rockwell. A reward was offered for their apprehension and on August 7, 1842, the Prophet and Rockwell were arrested; but both men were soon free on a writ issued by the city court. 57 The arresting officers swore they would return with a warrant that could not be violated


55The Wasp, May 26, 1842; D.H.C., V, p. 15.

56George M. Hinkle to Joseph Smith, June 1, 1842, ULF.

57Lee County Democrat, October 8, 1842; Niles' National Register, October 15, 1842; and Daily National Intelligencer, January 16, 1843.
by "any Mormon court." 58

In order to avoid further encroachments on their freedom, Joseph Smith and Rockwell went into hiding. Speculation as to their whereabouts led at least one newspaper to state that the Prophet was in England while another said he was in the west. Still another alleged he had gone to Canada. 59

On September 10, 1842, an officer returned to Nauvoo but could not find Joseph Smith. Tarrying in the city several days, he uttered heavy threats against the Prophet if he did not give himself up. 60 Joseph Smith, who was in the home of a Brother Sayers north of the city, said nothing and the officer finally withdrew.

Meanwhile, Rockwell was traveling east using the assumed names of French and Riley. 61 In the winter of 1843, homesick and almost destitute, Rockwell started home, was arrested in St. Louis, spent the next eight months in Missouri prisons and at times it was said he was going to reveal the whole plot and incriminate Joseph Smith.

According to a rumor circulated in July, 1843, the Prophet had been arrested and taken to Missouri to stand trial. The report also said that all of Nauvoo "was up in arms and a civil war was about to

58 Daily National Intelligencer, January 16, 1843.

59 Ibid., October 1, 1842; The Wasp, January 28, 1843.

60 The Wasp, January 28, 1843.

61 Bloomington Herald, March 27, 1843.
commence."62

Finally Joseph Smith, following the advice of Justin Butterfield and the new governor, Thomas Ford, surrendered to be tried before the Illinois supreme court. Judge Pope found the warrant under which he was arrested to be faulty, and the Prophet, able to prove he was not a fugitive from justice because he was not in Missouri at the time the crime was committed, was set free. Aroused citizens pictured Joseph Smith as one who could defy the laws of the land and intimidate supreme court judges.63

In the fall of 1843 Missouri officials, finding they had insufficient evidence to hold Rockwell, made him serve a five minute sentence for attempted "jail break" and allowed him to go free.64 Yet many Gentiles still believed the Prophet and Rockwell were guilty.

Crimes Perpetrated against the Saints

The Saints, generally accused of engaging in a life of crime, also suffered at the hands of criminals in the regions surrounding Nauvoo, causing Mormon writers to publish accusations of their own; and some

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62 Lee County Democrat, July 1, 1843.


members of the Church banded together in an attempt to thwart unlawful depredations from being committed.

Immediately after arriving in Illinois and Iowa the Saints were plagued by lawlessness. Wilford Woodruff recorded,

Montrose is now inhabited by all classes of people about one half are now members of the Church the remainder of the people are a mixture of all classes the most of them are eastern men there is however a small number of Missourians there is a man by the name of Camel who is a desperado who consequently makes much trouble in the place.65

George Miller complained that his cattle were shot on the prairies, "his fences laid down, and that flocks and herds of the prairies were often turned on his grain fields."66 He was constantly vexed with lawsuits, he added, and men tried to recover sums of money from him by using false witnesses.

Brigham Young wrote to Joseph Smith on May 26, 1839, that "there was a spirit of mobocracy" prevalent in the area and that rogues "cut down the barns belonging to the military station in Montrose, Iowa" because they did not want the Saints to use them.67 On January 10, 1841, a group of men entered the stable of Levi Moffitt and tried to stab a span of dapple gray horses valued at $250.00 belonging to Joseph Smith. Amos Chase was taken captive and forced by marauders to hand over the


66 George Miller to Northern Star, June 22, 1855.

deed to his property. When he told his enemies that he would petition the governor regarding their action they answered, "damn the Governor, we will put a hole in his head also."68 Because of the crime and mobbings in the areas surrounding Nauvoo there was an unusually large number of requests for fire arms during the summer of 1843.69 The twelve frequently met in council with six shooters laid on the center table and one fifteen shooter in every corner to protect themselves. Armed guards were posted every night around the city and "every street was guarded by police armed with large heavy canes with an iron or steel point, pistols and bowie knives."70

In order to combat and bring offenders to justice, a committee was appointed and given the responsibility of searching out and capturing any lawbreakers in the area. Hyrum Smith said,

The place has been infested of late with a gang of thieves, insomuch that property of almost all kinds, has been unsafe unless secured with bolts and bars, cattle and hogs have been made free booty.71

Two weeks later the Times and Seasons published the following article;

Nauvooans to the rescue! Your liberty is in danger! Thieves are in your midst! By day and by night are they prowling through your streets! Your property is in danger and life, and limb in jeopardy! Your life of justice, your personal honor, your attachment to your country, and your holy religion, all, loudly call upon you to assist in bringing

68 Affidavit of Amos Chase, December 19, 1843, ULF.
69 J. A. Forgens to Joseph Smith, May 22, 1843, ULF.
70 Missouri Reporter, October 31, 1845.
71 Times and Seasons, October, 1840.
the culprit to the condign punishment. 72

Threats were frequently made against Mormons living in outlying areas and many were warned that unless they moved from their land they would be killed. Such threats caused the twelve apostles to write,

We would inform them that persons whose conduct has exposed them to the just censure of an indignant public can have no fellowship amongst us, as we cannot and will not countenance rogues, thieves, and scoundrels knowingly; and we hereby warn them that the law will be as rigorously enforced against them in this place as in another as we consider such characters as a curse to society. 73

This article was followed by another written by the Prophet wherein he said,

Know yet therefore, that I Joseph Smith Mayor of the City of Nauvoo, will grant and ensure protection against all personal mob violence, to each and every citizen in this city, who will freely and voluntarily come before me, and truly make known the names of all such abominable characters as are engaged in said secret combination for stealing. 74

It was hoped, the Prophet said, that people would report and bring charges against many of the "itinerant rascals." 75

The Development of Lawlessness as a Cause of Conflict

Gentiles usually assumed that most crimes in Hancock County were the work of Mormons and repeatedly charged that Nauvoo harbored gangs

72 Ibid., November 15, 1840.

73 The Wasp, March 29, 1843.

74 Idem.

75 Ibid., April 19, 1843.
of thieves, murderers and counterfeiters. Mormon periodicals published vigorous denials and asserted the city had a lower crime rate than any in the nation of comparable size. Church leaders contended that the Saints had broken no law, infringed upon no man's rights nor "condoned crime in any fashion."

76 Those who believed there was crime in Nauvoo were challenged by Parley P. Pratt to investigate the members of the Church and talk to those who were acquainted with the proceedings and movements of the Mormon people. Pratt was certain that unbiased investigators would find that rumors of extensive lawlessness in Nauvoo were "false and malicious" stories.

77 In the Millennial Star he emphatically denied that Nauvoo harbored thieves, counterfeiters and murderers, arguing that the same people who had driven the Mormons from Missouri were "fanning and keeping alive those vicious rumors."

78 The accusation by the Quincy Whig that the Mormons were "screening horse thieves in Nauvoo" was emphatically denied by the editor of The Wasp who in turn challenged the Whig to send to the city council the names of offenders. In turn the editor of The Wasp swore the guilty would be punished. Immigrants journeying to Nauvoo on the Mississippi River reported that men at almost every landing would call them foul names, such as Joe's rats, while some people marched on the east side of the

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76 Millennial Star, September, 1842.

77 Ibid., December, 1841.

78 Ibid., September, 1841.
river and attempted to burn boats belonging to Mormons.\textsuperscript{79}

Though the Saints denied charges of lawbreaking, the denials did not quell the growing tide against them. Many non-Mormons ignored the fact that the Mormons were also suffering from the lawlessness of the frontier and frequent abuse from the hands of rogues using "lawful committees" as a guise to enable them to perpetrate unlawful degradations. Law enforcement agencies allegedly were powerless to deal with the ravages of the outlaw bands, and the Saints became the scapegoat for almost every crime committed in the county.

As a result of increased public feeling against the Mormons, the Nauvoo Neighbor ran an extra on June 21, 1844, in which it tried to correct the false statements then being carried abroad. The editor stated that Nauvoo was not a center for rogues, thieves, counterfeiters and murderers; that the editors of the Nauvoo Expositor were not run out of town because their lives were threatened, but had left of their own free will and choice.\textsuperscript{80} Joseph Smith offered to appear before any court in the state and be tried for any misconduct in order to relieve the public mind regarding conditions in Nauvoo.\textsuperscript{81} It was previously reported that Hyrum Smith had threatened the life of Thomas Sharp, editor of the Warsaw

\textsuperscript{79}Quincy Whig, September 20, 1843; Nauvoo Neighbor, September 20, 1843. The writer has been unable to obtain evidence that any names were ever sent to the editor of The Wasp.

\textsuperscript{80}Nauvoo Neighbor, June 21, 1844.

\textsuperscript{81}Samuel James to Willard Richards, June 30, 1844, ULF.
Signal, and had offered a reward to anyone who would shoot him, this, too, was denied in the extra.

Church leaders admitted that some Mormons were engaged in a life of crime but argued that as soon as their activities were discovered they were excommunicated. Church leaders further contended that some people engaged in criminal activities, claiming to be Mormons, had never been members of the Church. 82

Undoubtedly some of the anti-Mormons in the state sincerely believed the Mormons to be a lawless band, but others used such rumors as an excuse to obtain property and goods from the Saints. These unprincipled souls kept the rumors of Mormon disregard for law circulating so they could profit from the unrest. The Saints were continually accused of committing almost every misdeed in Hancock County; and when an individual Mormon did break the law, the whole Church was censured. Consequently false charges continued to circulate that lawlessness reigned in Nauvoo and that the Mormons were a band of unruly rogues.

82 Willard Richards to a Mr. Braynean, November 18, 1845, Hardin Collection, Chicago Historical Library.
CHAPTER XI

MORMON PROSPERITY AND COMMERCIAL ACTIVITY,
A SOURCE OF CONFLICT

Introduction

While the remainder of the state suffered and floundered in the midst of a depression, Nauvoo seemed to increase in power and riches. Yet, at the height of this alleged prosperity Joseph Smith and other prominent Mormons took advantage of the new bankruptcy law which seemed inconsistent with their apparent well-being and caused some Gentiles to believe their action illegal. Other non-Mormons asserted that at least part of the trouble between the Saints and Gentiles in Illinois could be traced to the prosperity of the Mormons.

Settlement and Growth of Nauvoo

Mormonism was introduced into Illinois soon after the organization of the Church. The Evening and Morning Star, the first Mormon periodical in November, 1832, referred to activities of a Mormon branch already organized in Fulton County.¹ This branch was augmented in 1838 when, following the battle of Far West, a large number of Mormons fled

¹Evening and Morning Star, November, 1832.
to Illinois for protection and safety where they were received with open arms. News of their having been persecuted at the hands of the Missourians seems to have aroused much favorable sentiment on their behalf. ² These Saints finding such a kind and charitable welcome, urged others to settle in that state. ³ Following the imprisonment of their Prophet and the extermination order of Boggs in 1838, many Mormons, heeding their advice, gathered to and tarried in or about Quincy, finding agricultural and mechanical employment as the opportunity arose while purchasing or leasing small acreage for farming. ⁴

When the bulk of the Saints crossed the Mississippi River in their exodus from the state of Missouri, David W. Rogers, S. Bent and Israel Barlow were appointed by Brigham Young to reconnoitre "the upper river country" in the state of Illinois and the territory of Iowa to ascertain what accommodations could be secured to shelter the Saints from the inclemency of the season. They were gone from the encampment for nine days exploring, among others, the towns of upper and lower Commerce. Finding forty empty dwellings in Commerce, they made conditional arrangements to purchase land and buildings in the area. Then crossing the Mississippi into the Iowa territory they found the barracks

²Oliver B. Huntington, "Diary of Oliver B. Huntington," p. 9.


of Old Fort Des Moines. Dr. Isaac Galland claimed possession of the buildings and the right to sell 20,000 acres of land known as the half breed reservation. Rogers and Bent obtained information and documents showing what could be done with that section of the country and returned to Quincy. Rogers was then sent to Liberty, Missouri, where he informed the Prophet of his activities. After selling land in Jackson County, Missouri, he returned to Liberty and was told by Joseph Smith to have the Saints settle in Commerce as rapidly as possible.

In May, 1839, Dr. Isaac Galland sold Vinson Knight and Oliver Granger, agents for the Church, about 10,000 acres of land for $50,428.22. As partial payment Galland was given the deed to Mormon land in Missouri valued at $62,000.00. This was done because most of the Saints were sick from exposure, lacked the comforts of life and were "naked, destitute and in a miserable condition." The Mormons also purchased large tracts of land from Horace Hotchkiss. In order to procure this property at such liberal loan provisions—no interest for the first five years and twenty-five years to complete payments—the Prophet was

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5Israel Barlow, after a few days, became ill and was forced to return to Quincy, Illinois, before the others.

6Letter of Noah Rogers found in the ULF.

forced to pay a high price. 8

Soon Commerce was bustling with activity. Newel Knight, for example, built a home for his family and then assisted in the construction of a flour mill. 9 Surveying the community was the task of Brother Ripley, whereas other men were asked to found a printing establishment. 10 The Mormon portion of Commerce was re-named Nauvoo which, according to the Prophet, was derived from the Hebrew signifying fair, or very beautiful. 11 By June, 1840, over two hundred and fifty houses had been constructed and there were about one thousand acres of land divided into town lots, eleven

8Hotchkiss and the Prophet did not agree as to what had transpired relative to the land purchased. Hotchkiss contended that two notes of $25,000, one maturing in ten and one in twenty years, was the principle. There were forty additional notes of $1,500 each, two of which were due every twelve months for twenty years. These were, apparently, the interest, eight percent a year simple interest on $50,000. There were two additional notes of $1,250, one due in five years and the other in ten. So the Church was to pay the Hotchkiss partners $3,000 each year for twenty years, plus $1,250 the fifth year, $26,250 the tenth year and $25,000 the twentieth year. Finally an additional $2,000 was to be paid Hugh White, who owned a small interest in the property. The total amount was $114,500. Joseph Smith subsequently claimed that Hotchkiss had agreed verbally that no interest was to be charged, but the contracts do not suggest any such agreement. Flanders p. 42.

9Newel Knight, "Journal of Newel Knight," typed copy found in the Brigham Young University Library, p. 101.


11A. Ripley, writing in the Times and Seasons, December, 1839.
rods by twelve, in anticipation that their size would adequately provide for gardens. 12

In order to facilitate the acquisition of property and expedite other financial operations Joseph Smith, in the special January, 1841, conference, was selected as trustee-in-trust for the Church and members were asked to give their meager means to help each other make deed payments. 13 Enoch Burns reported that he gave five dollars, which was all the money in his possession, and apparently others were as generous. 14

Nauvoo continued to prosper while many sections of the state languished in a severe economic depression. One reason for this prosperity was the unity and desire of the Mormons to work together in order to achieve financial stability. Robert B. Thompson, for instance, was employed in the Quincy courthouse but sent most of the money he earned to Nauvoo for use in establishing new homes for the Saints. 15 By 1842 the Nauvoo Temple was under construction which provided labor for many of those who needed work. 16 William Player employed as many as

12 Mary Fielding to Joseph Fielding, June, 1840, found in the Millennial Star, June, 1840; Mrs. Wealthy Richards to her father and mother, April 11, 1840, found in the Huntington Library, San Marino, California; Bathsheba Bigler to George A. Smith, May 10, 1840, ULF.

13 Bouquet, p. 494.


15 Biography of Robert B. Thompson, found in ULF.

fifteen men full time cutting stone, and other people labored to build houses, clear farm land and build mercantile establishments. 17

Almost every newspaper article regarding Nauvoo at this time mentioned the industry and neatness of the city. An English convert wrote to his brother, Edward, that although he had suffered family losses in crossing the ocean, sea sickness and much toil, he would gladly do it again just to see Nauvoo. 18

The Mormon capital was described by the Prophet in a letter to the Millennial Star as being "filled with the sound of the axe, the hammer and the saw" and "a place where the landscape is fanned by the sounds of industry." 19 The Mormons often claimed that in the midst of the general distress which prevailed in the rest of Illinois because of a lack of employment opportunities, thousands of Saints escaped the abuses and distresses of the country and found a home where they enjoyed all the blessings of liberty, peace and plenty. 20

In February, 1842, Edward Hunter was sent east to procure money for the Nauvoo House and the temple. 21 He also purchased over twenty-five hundred dollars worth of goods for the Prophet. He said he was sending about four hundred dollars to the Prophet to be used in erecting the temple and a similar amount to purchase stock in the Nauvoo House.

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17 Snyder, p. 374.

18 Millennial Star, February, 1842.

19 Ibid., September, 1841.

20 Ibid., February, 1842.

21 Edward Hunter to Joseph Smith, February 10, 1842, ULF.
Reuben McBride was dispatched to Kirtland and requested to collect all of the debts owed the Saints in that region. It was also hoped he would be able to trade some Mormon land there to Hotchkiss for property in Nauvoo because, in spite of their surface prosperity, the Saints lacked money. 22 Alonzo LeBaron, for example, wrote to Joseph Smith:

I find the amount of principle and interest yet due to be about 815.00. I therefore propose that you endorse the amount due on my lot which with interest is about 142.45 and give me a deed. I next proposed that you place to my credit or pay for me 200 on the temple and next, get me seven shares of stock on the Nauvoo House. The remainder is about 122.62 no there is cr. of 16.00 on my book to Granger which substracted leaves about 100.00. This amount I humbly [sic] request you to pay me in such as will supply my present necessity. 23

By 1842 Nauvoo was firmly established, thriving and arousing the jealousy of her neighbors. Business was so good that the Prophet in January, 1842, published a notice in the newspapers informing the Saints that hereafter tithing would be recorded by two clerks instead of one. 24 Yet all was not as prosperous as would at first appear. There were signs that the economy of the city was built on a false structure and that perhaps members of the Church, too, might suffer if the depression in Illinois continued.

22 Reuben McBride to Joseph Smith, January 30, 1842, ULF.

23 Alonzo LeBaron to Joseph Smith, June 22, 1842, ULF.

Depression in Illinois

Thus, while the citizens of Nauvoo seemingly prospered, the state suffered because of a severe economic inactivity. Many of the state's banks by 1841 were on the brink of failure which caused their notes, already depreciated from twelve to fifteen percent, to steadily lose even more of their value. The state itself was in debt over $300,000 for ordinary expenses of maintaining its government, and the treasury was empty, not having sufficient funds to pay postage on correspondence. 25

The credit of the state of Illinois had fallen so that its bonds could not be sold on any market for any approximation of their face value. The January interest was paid, but having no funds to meet the semi-annual July interest, John D. Whiteside, the funds commissioner, hypothecated to McAllister and Stebbins, brokers in New York City, 804 interest bearing internal improvement bonds of $1,000 each for the loan of $321,600, of which amount but $261,460 was ever received. 26

As result of the depression there was a cessation in railroad building and the collapse of innumerable private enterprises. Traffic in real estate was totally paralyzed and commerce and trade stagnated. Values of property and farm products fell thirty to fifty percent. Almost everyone wanted to sell but because all were in debt there were few purchasers who had the ability to pay. Not only Illinois but other areas

25Snyder, p. 374.

26Ibid., p. 344.
of the country were suffering in the economic downturn causing congress to pass a general bankruptcy law that served, before its repeal in 1843, "to relieve many dishonest rascals from their just obligations adding distress to creditors."²⁷

Largely because of the depression the Mormons were looked on as money-mongers and many people believed they had profited from the persecution they allegedly had endured.²⁸ Yet in the midst of this prosperity Joseph Smith and other prominent Mormons filed for bankruptcy. According to the Davenport Gazette Joseph Smith's debts amounted to $100,000 and it was said his assets were of a "trifling value."²⁹ The bankruptcy law specifically stated that no conveyance of property could be made in contemplation of such action subsequent to January 1, 1841, and religious societies could only be incorporated under the appointment of trustees and not under a sole trustee. Joseph Smith's serving as the Church's sole trustee-in-trust, gave rise to charges that he was acting illegally.³⁰ Others said the Prophet was further acting unlawfully in that he was attempting to transfer his private land holdings to himself as trustee-in-trust for the Church and thus gain the privileges of bankruptcy without suffering. However, in reality he was merely transferring

²⁷Idem.
²⁸Times and Seasons, February 1, 1841.
²⁹Davenport Gazette, June 15, 1842.
³⁰The Wasp, February 6, 1842.
land that he had purchased in his own name for the Church to the corporation of the Church. The Prophet was also accused of selling land to relatives and friends for small sums, knowing full well that he could reclaim the land after he had settled his debts by means of bankruptcy. 31

Joseph Smith's petition for insolvency was published April 28, 1842, and read as follows;

Notice is hereby given, that Joseph Smith, of Hancock County has filed his petition in this court to be declared a bankrupt and to be discharged from his debts under the act of congress, in such case made provided: and that an order has been duly entered in this court appointing the 6th of June next at the District Court room in the city of Springfield in this district, as the time and place for hearing of said petition. All persons interested may then and there appear and show cause, if they have, why the prayer and said petition should not be granted. 32

It was officially reported in June, 1842, that Joseph Smith's debts amounted to $99,325.57 and his total assets consisted of some notes obtained from individuals for various amounts in some trifling household furniture and a few lots in Nauvoo. 33

In defense of his action the Prophet wrote to Horace Hotchkiss,

My engagements will not admit of a lengthy detail of events and circumstances which have transpired to bring about that state of things which now exists in this place as before you receive this you will probably be apprized of the failure of myself and brethren to execute our designs in paying off our contracts, or in other words we have been compelled to pay our debts by the most popular method, by

31 Davenport Gazette, June 15, 1842.
32 Ibid., June 25, 1842.
33 Idem.
petitioning for the privilege of general bankruptcy, a principle so popular at the present moment throughout the union. . . . You are aware sir, in some measure of the embarrassment under which we have been compelled to contract debt in order to execute both as individuals and as a society and it is on account of this as well as pressure on us for debts absolutely urgent in themselves, that we have been compelled to resort to the course we have to make a general settlement and this deferred till the last moment, hoping that some thing would turn up in our favor, so that we might be saved the painful necessity of resorting to such measures, to accomplish justice demanded a very different course from these who are justly our debtors but demanded in vain. 34

At this time Hyrum Smith, Jared Carter, Sidney Rigdon, Reynolds Cahoon and Vinson Knight also filed for bankruptcy.

The public was unable to understand how a city could be erected and display every sign of prosperity and have so many of its leading citizens bankrupt. At least part of the reason for the financial difficulties resulted from debts incurred in Ohio and Missouri. Joseph Smith had, for example, lost almost everything in a material way twice since January, 1838. He and Hyrum were also paying the debts, which amounted to almost two thousand dollars, of their recently departed brother, Don Carlos, which caused an additional hardship. 35

It is apparent that the depression was having its effect on the Mormons and they, like other people in Illinois, suffered under economic

34Joseph Smith to H. R. Hotchkiss, May 13, 1842, found in the Illinois State Historical Society Library.

35Charles Ivins to Hyrum Smith, August 22, 1842, ULF; Don Carlos Smith to Joseph Smith, June 3, 1841, ULF.
difficulties. Even though Nauvoo was prospering, individual Saints shared in the financial hardships of their fellow men.

Factors Arousing Non-Mormon Bitterness

Much of the early concern on the part of non-Mormons regarding the material growth of Nauvoo seemed to center in increased Mormon immigration. For instance, the Bloomington Herald reported,

From every quarter they are coming at a rapid rate, and if nothing transpires to hinder the progress of delusion and emigration, the city of Nauvoo will soon become the most populous city in the west. So great has been the emigration that employment and means of subsistence have become inadequate, consequently stores and warehouses, barn yards and cowpens have suffered frequent uses of late. 36

The Illinoian stated that "within the last week nearly 40 wagons, containing about 240 emigrants have passed through Jacksonville, Illinois, on their way to Nauvoo." 37 At least some of the newspapers in the state scoffed at the naive beliefs of these Mormon emigrants claiming that when an emigrant was seized with a toothache, two men would lay hands on his head and pray for him. 38

At about this same time it was charged by some writers in Illinois that a tract of land containing 120,000 acres lying directly opposite Nauvoo had been settled by the Mormons even though they did not hold

36 Bloomington Herald, December 10, 1841.

37 The Illinoian, August 14, 1841.

38 Iowa City Standard, November 12, 1841.
title to the property. 39 It was said that about 2,000 Mormons were living on the land and claimed title to it because God had given it to them. Although the evidence will not support the validity of this charge, considerable resentment seems to have been aroused against the Mormons as a people.

Also aggravating the situation was the Saints attempt to establish an independent economic system in Nauvoo. Heber C. Kimball spoke in 1845 expressing the desire to develop a self-sufficient city set apart from the Gentiles or non-Mormons. 40 The Saints were charged with being unwilling to work with the rest of the citizens of Hancock County in trying to overcome the economic depression. 41 Thus economically, as well as socially and religiously, the two groups became even more mutually exclusive. The city of Warsaw, for example, was not included in the list of municipalities in which products manufactured in Nauvoo were distributed and Thomas Sharp, editor of the Warsaw Signal, in an obviously retaliatory statement, expressed the view that he was thankful such goods would not be available. 42 Other citizens were not of the same opinion and held that Mormon economic exclusiveness was one of the major reasons the county was not recovering from the depression.

39 Bloomington Herald, December 10, 1841.

40 Times and Seasons, August 1, 1845.

41 Crider, p. 147.

42 Idem.
It was also asserted by non-Mormons that Joseph Smith held a land monopoly in Hancock County. In support of this contention, non-Mormons cited county deed records showing that on a single day, April 6, 1842, over 250 lots amounting to sixty-two blocks of land in the city were surrendered to the Prophet as trustee-in-trust for the Church.

The exact extent of Mormon land holdings outside of Nauvoo has not been ascertained. However, W.A. Linn said the Saints owned a town called Nashville, Iowa, parts of Keokuk and Montrose, Iowa, and claimed 30,000 acres in the Half Breed tract, also in Iowa. A further examination of the Hancock County deed records reveals that the Mormons purchased land in the immediate vicinity of Nauvoo around Appanoose, Senora and Montebello, extending as far as Plymouth.\(^{43}\) George Miller claimed that the Saints had 22,040 acres of ground around Nauvoo under cultivation and about 7,800 acres in other parts of the county which altogether was worth about $60,000.\(^{44}\)

At least two circumstances enabled Joseph Smith to establish a kind of land monopoly. First, the bulk of the emigrants to Hancock County was Mormon, and second, all Mormons were more or less forced to buy land from him or qualified agents of the Church which aroused considerable resentment on the part of non-Mormons who seem to have believed that Church leaders were violating the economic freedom of

\(^{43}\text{Ibid.}, \text{ p. 152.}\)

\(^{44}\text{George Miller to Thomas Owens, December 1, 1845, ULF.}\)
their members. 45

Non-Mormons accused the Saints of aggravating an economic situation which was already bad. They said Mormons came to Illinois en masse, with limited capital, and attempted to develop sufficient industry to satisfy their own needs. Gentiles claimed it was a case of too much success in promoting the zeal to move to Zion, because many converts upon arriving had no visible means of supporting themselves. 46 The Church in extending financial aid to these converts and even helping some pay the expenses of journeying to Nauvoo caused, in the eyes of the Gentiles, greater financial difficulties than before.

Many people tended to buy or sell land with Mormons because the holdings of the Saints were more attractive to poor people than public land. This was largely because the Mormons traded property in Missouri in exchange for land in Illinois and obtained other land on credit terms. Therefore, they were in a position to dispose of lands on credit or lease them, whereas the government demanded cash sales. Also, government lands could be sold in no less than eighty acre plots but the Mormons were able to sell in smaller quantities which converts could afford.

In a letter to the Saints in England Joseph Smith urged Mormon

45Crider, p. 153.

46Ibid., p. 151; many Saints reported economic difficulties after arriving in Nauvoo. See Lorenzo D. Young, "Diary of Lorenzo D. Young," p. 79; Enoch Burns, "Diary of Enoch Burns," p.:59; Bathsheba Bigler to George A. Smith, May 10, 1844, ULF; Life of John Henderson, ULF.
preachers to persuade capitalists and craftsmen to come to Nauvoo.\textsuperscript{47} Church leaders constantly repeated the argument that the Mormons were prosperous, thereby utilizing economics as a means of persuading further immigration to their major city.

The non-Mormons argued that this alleged prosperity was misleading because the Mormons did not have clear title to the land and also charged that Mormon leaders victimized their followers for economic gain; that they resorted to unethical business practices when dealing with non-Mormons; that their clannishness formed a barrier to proper business relationships; and their industry could not keep pace with the increase in population.\textsuperscript{48} The fact that some Mormons were jobless and hungry provided circumstantial evidence in support of these beliefs.

Gentiles were frequently heard to remark, "I would sell out and leave the Mormon country, if I could find a buyer," suggesting that the basic economic problems which the Mormons presented were the subject of much private and public discussion.\textsuperscript{49} Needing someone to blame for current economic conditions, the Mormon Church became the scapegoat for the Gentiles.

\textsuperscript{47}Crider, p. 114.

\textsuperscript{48}Erastus Snow, it was said, refused to pay tithing on his interest. Gentiles claimed Church leaders forcibly collected it from him. This was used by non-Mormons to lend credance to the charges that leaders of the Church economically victimized converts. Document in the ULF.

\textsuperscript{49}Crider, p. 156.
Economic policies of Church leaders also played a part in arousing much negative feeling on the part of former Mormons. The Laws, Fosters and Higbees believed that they should be free to conduct economic affairs as they saw fit. That the city council passed laws prohibiting people from buying or selling land in Nauvoo without permission from the leaders of the Church, caused these men to refuse obedience to such ordinances. This opposition, among other things, led to their being excommunicated from the Church, causing them to unite with anti-Mormon groups in an attempt to destroy the Prophet.

A large number of people, upon hearing the Mormons were going to leave the state, waited for an opportunity to confiscate land and property without paying for it. This view is also supported by the fact that "new citizens," most of whom were not Mormons, were persecuted by mobs after they had purchased land from the Saints. The people in Hancock County seem to have believed themselves justified in taking Mormon land after the Saints left the county. 50

Reports persisted that the Mormons would one day control a major portion of the state because of their land holdings. Horace Hotchkiss continued to proclaim that with the help of Mormons he would make Nauvoo the largest, grandest and most prosperous city in the state. 51

50Missouri Reporter, April 10, 1846.

51John Gillette to Horace Hotchkiss, July 15, 1844, found in the Illinois State Historical Society Library; Horace Hotchkiss to Brigham Young, November 15, 1844, ULF.
Even after the death of Joseph Smith he urged Brigham Young to support him in fostering manufacturing "of all descriptions" and actively engaged in recruiting mechanics and other skilled labor in an attempt to further build the economic structure of the city. In one letter he expressed the hope that with the combined efforts of his land syndicate and the Church, Nauvoo would become the largest city in the west. Such statements only seemed to arouse jealousy on the part of non-Mormons and they became even more determined to drive the Saints from the state.

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52 Horace Hotchkiss to Brigham Young, November 22, 1844, ULF; Smith Tuttle to John D. Gillette, November 3, 1845, found in the Illinois State Historical Society Library; Thomas Bullock to Horace Hotchkiss, December 12, 1844, ULF; Thomas Owens said the Saints in and around Nauvoo had over 20,000 acres of land but people would not purchase it unless the Saints gave them assurance that they intended to leave the country. Thomas Owens to J. B. Backenstos, September 20, 1845, ULF.
CHAPTER XII

MORMON DOCTRINE AND JOSEPH SMITH'S
PERSONALITY

Introduction

Although the Latter-day Saints lived in a land supposedly dedicated to religious freedom, people used peculiar Mormon religious tenets to justify some of their illegal activities. Therefore, even though Mormon beliefs were not the decisive factor in causing conflict, some of their especially peculiar doctrines did play a role in arousing antagonism.

The Belief that Joseph Smith was Prophet of God

Because Joseph Smith was the ultimate authority in the Church and was considered to be its prophet, seer and revelator, members believed he received revelations from God for the good of the Church. Many people, not of the Mormon faith, traveled to Nauvoo just to see this "American prophet," and their descriptions of and reactions to him helped mold public opinion. One reporter characterized him as being "an ordinary looking man of medium height, nothing impressive in appearance, dressed in homespun blue jeans, trimmed in smooth brass
buttons."¹ He was said by another to be "a compound of ignorance, vanity, arrogance, courseness, stupidity and vulgarity."² Yet another remarked he was,

improved considerably in his mind and manners in his person he is still coarse. His manners are not refined; he is, however, far from being clownish. The massive gold ring of which Mr. Caswell speaks he still wears. . . . in his conversations he is uncommonly shrewd, and exhibits more knowledge of books, sacred and profane, than his personal appearance at first seems to promise. There is however a kind of levity in his manners, unbecoming the Prophet or Apostle.³

Still another reporter expressed surprise upon finding that the Prophet was no "anthrophagi, nor did his head grow beneath his shoulders but was much like other men."⁴

Newspaper accounts were most often critical of the Mormon leader. He was accused of being overcome with the spirit of revelation while walking with his brethren and, it was said, had to be carried quietly home.⁵

According to another rumor, the Prophet supposedly received a revelation

¹"Autobiography of Clarissa Emily Hobbs," Journal of the Illinois State Historical Society, XXVIII (January, 1925), p. 653. According to Demick B. Huntington, the Prophet Joseph arrived in Quincy April 22, 1838, dressed in an old pair of boots full of holes, his pants were torn and tucked into his boots, his coat was blue and he wore a black hat on his head. Document of Demick B. Huntington, April 22, 1839. ULF.

²Buckingham, p. 188.


⁴The Western Atlas and Saturday Evening Gazette, August 4, 1841.

⁵Vinson Knight, "Diary of Vinson Knight," found in L. D. S. Church Historian's Library, p. 14.
from God that he would be bodily absent from his people for ten years which caused one reporter to accuse him of being a knave more than a Prophet. 6 Disgusting, foul, loathsome, possessing a black heart and capable of daring blasphemies, were all words and phrases used by non-Mormons to describe Joseph Smith. 7 To Gentiles he was a tavern keeper, a base libertine, a ruler of tens of thousands, a slave to unbridled passions, a profane swearer, a doctor of Bacchus, a bar room fiddler, and an invader of civic and social and moral relations of men. 8 The Reverend L. Sunderland accused the Prophet of receiving revelations that added to his wealth and that of his family and friends. 9 Frequently he was charged with leading thousands of people to destruction, which became the focal point of much anti-Mormon feeling.

Henry Caswell accused him of operating a brewery at Nauvoo saying he was often seen drunk, and Henry Mayhew contended he was the president of a well-organized system of licentious knaves and a seducer of many women. 10

At least some of these reports actually caused a few people to

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6Quincy Whig, August 20, 1842.

7Warsaw Message, February 7, 1844.

8Crider, p. 136.


wonder if the Prophet was really as evil and vile a person as the newspapers were depicting. For example, a B. G. Weidgil in a letter to Joseph Smith wrote,

I have frequent controversies about religion wherein your name has been brought in, and you have heaped upon your respected person all manner of vile abuse, which I not having the facts could not deny, you must have seen many newspapers wherein you have been shamefully abused, that would not amount to anything if it was not believed and reiterated, I wish you would condescend to inform me as regards the facts of your mission and the establishment of your religion, etc.  

Samuel W. Richards reports that a feeling of disgust was prevalent regarding the course the Latter-day Saints had taken which, people felt, merited their indignation. He further claims that prejudice was very much in evidence, and the charges continually raised against the Saints caused some individuals to wonder if things were really as despicable in Nauvoo as they had been led to believe.

Yet, O. C. Skinner remarked that several witnesses at the trial of his accused murderers said it was publicly talked about in Carthage that Joseph Smith would have to be killed. At least one religious leader, an Episcopalian bishop, in 1843 accused the Prophet of being such an imposter that he would not recognize any Mormon baptism as

11 B. G. Weidgil to Joseph Smith, May 29, 1844, ULF. The writer has been unable to locate the Prophet's reply.

12 Report of S. W. Richards to Brigham Young, February 10, 1845, ULF.

13 Notes on the trial of the murderers of Joseph Smith by O. C. Skinner, found in the Illinois State Historical Society Library.
being valid. The fact that Joseph claimed to be a prophet seems to have aroused antagonism, and a large number of non-Mormons who visited Nauvoo found their anticipations were not satisfied when they met Joseph Smith. Perhaps they expected an Elijah who called down fire from heaven, or an Elisha who could make an axe swim on water, or a Moses speaking to God in a burning bush; instead they found a man who loved to wrestle and pull sticks, played with children, loved people, and frequently boasted in public discourses of his strength. They came to see a prophet and left convinced they had viewed and conversed with an imposter. His followers, too, were thought to be insincere in their religious beliefs. Many people felt morally justified in persecuting a group who taught that they were led by a prophet of God.

The Gathering

Mormons believed that on April 3, 1836, the ancient prophet Moses appeared in the Kirtland Temple and restored the "keys" for the "gathering of Israel." The gathering was not to take place in a miraculous way, rather each member of the Church was to actively participate in building the Kingdom of God, and bringing the Saints together from all parts of the world.

Mormon missionaries were continually leaving the county causing

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14 Pastoral letter to Bishop Chase, January 3, 1843, found in the Illinois State Historical Society Library.

15 W. Aitken, A Journey Up the Mississippi River From Its Mouth to Nauvoo (London: John Williamson, 1851).
one newspaper to report that Mormon elders had been commissioned to
go and convert all of Europe. 16 These Mormon disciples were partly
successful, resulting in a continual stream of immigrants to the Mormon
city. Many passenger boats carried two or three hundred new Mormons,
and by 1844 it was estimated that over 5,000 new immigrants had arrived
and were living in the Mormon capital. 17 Gentiles were also concerned
because the Saints did not mingle as did many other religious groups with
the rest of the Illinois citizenry. It was reported that the paramount
reason they were anti-social was because the Mormons were prejudiced
and hostile toward people not of their faith and believed that they were a
chosen people whose promised land was Illinois.

New converts who gathered to Nauvoo were accused of being un-
learned dupes who believed in all manner of spiritual excesses including
the laying on of hands. 18 One newspaper reported that the Mormons
were organizing societies in every region of the United States and that
they were holding camp meetings where their preachers made extra-
ordinary efforts to increase the number of proselytes. 19

Because of this great missionary zeal and the gathering spirit
which often accompanied it, at least one newspaper reported that "it is

16 The Painesville Telegraph, September 13, 1841.

17 Gustive O. Larson, Prelude to the Kingdom (New Hampshire:

18 Fort Madison Courier, November 13, 1841.

19 Peoria Register and North-Western Gazetteer, September 17,
1841.
evident that the leaders in this cause have far-reaching designs that are other than a religious aspect." It was further stated that something would have to be done about the Mormons because of their doctrines and the activities that resulted therefrom. They could, it was said, no longer be thought of as mere dupes but were becoming a dangerous group in society. The Western Atlas reported that "this strange sect is flourishing at home and abroad and making exertions and proselytes in all directions." Non-members viewed the gathering with suspicion and alarm and Governor Ford argued that the Mormons would not have been persecuted if they had mingled with other citizens in Illinois and had established small branches instead of one great city, Nauvoo.

The Kingdom of God

Joseph Smith's belief that the Kingdom of God was in part a political organization caused some concern among non-Mormons. Gentiles charged the Prophet with teaching that this kingdom would be independent of the civil government and that his people, after its establishment, would not be governed by the laws of the land. These individuals misinterpreted the Prophet's teachings. Joseph Smith believed he was

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21 Western Atlas and Saturday Evening Gazette, February 20, 1841.

engaged in establishing the Kingdom of God on earth but this kingdom even though it had its political and temporal aspects, was to be ushered in by love and gentle persuasion. Even though the Prophet was ordained king by the Council of Fifty, he was not actively engaged in treasonable activities. Public statements reveal that he was loyal to the country which gave him birth. The kingdom he espoused was an ideal which would only be achieved when men turned to Christ and made Him their Lord and Master. The Prophet and other Church members were just his emissaries in attempting to bring this ideal into reality. Yet the general public did not realize that such was the case and continued to accuse Joseph of teaching concepts that seemed treasonable.

The Book of Mormon

The Book of Mormon and its teachings regarding the American Indian also aroused considerable anti-Mormon feeling. It was charged that the Mormons believed this book was divinely inspired and that it was translated with the direct assistance of God. Non-Mormons sought to prove that belief in additional scripture was not in accordance with the teachings of the Bible, for many Americans believed the Bible was

23Joseph Smith to James Arlington Bennett, March 17, 1842, ULF.

24For a discussion of Joseph Smith's kingly ordination see chapter five, page 64.

25C rider, p. 67.

26Tbid., p. 40.
the books of books, that it contained no errors and that it contained all
truths necessary for man's salvation. 27 Many resented the belief that
The Book of Mormon was also the word of God.

One of the most serious conflicts arose from the alleged Mormon
belief that the Indians were a chosen people. Rumors of Indians visiting
Nauvoo were frequently reported in local newspapers; and the Prophet
recorded that on November 5, 1842, he was visited by Indians who were
accompanied by a Negro interpreter. They expressed, he said, "great
friendship for the Mormon people and wanted to be their friends." 28
Phoebe Woodruff wrote that in May, 1840, an Indian family was baptized
into the Church. She claimed that the father was an interpreter for six
tribes and the Mormons believed he would have a great impact on the
Indians as a whole. 29 The Saints also were said to be convinced that
most of the Indians would soon be brought into the Church through the
efforts of missionaries called to serve among them. 30

Largely because of such events and reports, the non-Mormons
believed the Saints had brought great numbers of aborigines into Han-
cock County to massacre and scalp non-Mormon inhabitants. 31

27 Idem.


29 Phoebe Woodruff to Wilford Woodruff, Millennial Star, August,
1840.

30 Journal of Phineas Young's mission to the Lamanites, ULF.

31 Illinois State Register, November 25, 1844.
Following the murder of Joseph and Hyrum Smith it was rumored that many Saints, together with two or three hundred Indians, were about to burn and annihilate Carthage. Later evidence indicated that the Indians in the vicinity were just passing through and had no connection with the Saints.  

As early as August, 1842, a license was procured by some Mormons to trade with Indians as far west as the Rocky Mountains. There was also a considerable missionary effort on the part of the Saints among tribes in the Black Pine settlement of Wisconsin. Such activities were strictly of a religious nature and it is unfortunate that such proselyting work was construed as being an attempt to arouse Indians against the white settlers of Illinois.  

The Nauvoo Temple  

The building of the Nauvoo Temple also became a source of anti-Mormon feeling because of speculation regarding its purpose and the activities carried on within its walls. Baptism for the dead and marriages for time and eternity were performed therein, causing rumors to persist that within that structure strange immoral rites were frequently conducted.  

\[32^{\text{Idem.}}\]  

\[33^{\text{License found in the L. D. S. Church Historian's Library signed by D. S. Mitchell and issued to P. Chouteau.}}\]  

\[34^{\text{Lee County Democrat, June 3, 1843.}}\]
The temple became a target of mob violence and at least one person thought it was a fort, arguing that the Mormons were secretly hiding munitions in the arsenal. When the occasion arises, he argued, the Saints will gather there and defy "all hell to blast them out."\(^{35}\)

Masons, as stated before, thought the temple was a place where the secret rites of their order were given indiscriminately to men and women. Therefore, many Masons viewed the structure with abhorrence.

**Some Peculiar Mormon Doctrines**

Other peculiar Mormon doctrines, as interpreted by Joseph Smith and his followers, also aroused the public mind against the Saints. For example, Mormon teachings regarding spiritual gifts caused people to ridicule the Saints. Mormons were accused of various kinds of spiritual irregularities, such as speaking and singing in tongues, laying on hands, and continual active revelation.\(^ {36}\)

The last two public sermons of Joseph Smith also aroused considerable anti-Mormon feeling. In the King Follett Discourse, given before a large assemblage of the Church in Nauvoo, the Prophet was quoted as teaching that "God himself was once as we are now, and is an exalted man, and sits enthroned in yonder heaven!"\(^ {37}\) In continuing this

\(^{35}\)Mac, p. 225.

\(^{36}\)Isaac Haight, "Journal of Isaac Haight," June 26, 1842, original in the L.D.S. Church Historian's Library.

theme he said;

It is the first principles of the gospel to know for certainty the character of God, and to know we may converse with him, as one man converses with another, and that he was once a man like us; yea, that God himself, the father of us all, dwelt on an earth, the same as Jesus Christ himself did; and I will show it from the Bible.\footnote{Idem.}

He told his faithful followers that one day they too, if obedient to all the Lord's commandments, might become gods and actively participate in creating other worlds.

In his last public discourse, often referred to as the "Plurality of God's Speech," he said that there were gods many and lords many and that,

If Abraham reasoned thus—if Jesus Christ was the son of God, and John reasoned that God the Father of Jesus Christ, had a father, you may suppose he had a father also. Where was there a son without a father? and where was there a father without first being a son?\footnote{Ibid., p. 228.}

This view was interpreted by some as propounding a doctrine of infinite regression. Rather than having to explain a first cause, Mormonism taught there was never a son without a father, the implication being that God the Father was a son and had a father and so on into infinity.\footnote{This discourse of the Prophet's was not accepted by Orson Pratt and others as an authoritative teaching of the Church.}
said to be blasphemous and caused some members and Gentiles to oppose Joseph's religious teachings. The Nauvoo Expositor in its first and only issue specified that the plurality of gods doctrine was a paramount reason for opposing Joseph Smith. Ministers, like B. F. Morris and other devout Illinois Christians, considered many Mormon teachings to be un-Christian, un-American, and un-intelligent, causing open and active hostility toward the Saints.
CHAPTER XIII

SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

There was no one reason for the Mormon-Gentile discord in Illinois. In order to determine adequately each factor pertaining to the perplexities of the situation every individual involved would have to be interviewed in depth regarding his motives for hostile action against the Saints. Because the difficulties commenced one hundred and twenty-eight years ago and concluded seven years later, the task of determining each person's motives for involvement in the conflict is an impossibility. However, sufficient newspaper accounts, diaries, journals, letters and official documents have been preserved that some fairly accurate conclusions can be postulated. A thorough examination of the available evidence clearly reveals that some things caused greater conflict than others. It also becomes apparent that the various conflict-producing factors are somewhat interrelated. That Mormons and non-Mormons were unable to dwell in peace resulted from a combination of the inter-twined factors which, when clearly delineated, reveals that a serious clash was probably unavoidable.

One of the major factors which caused difficulties between Mormons and Gentiles was the lawless tradition prevalent in that section of
the country. Like other frontier states Illinois had a tradition of violence, and extra-legal groups banding together for a common goal was not uncommon. Elijah P. Lovejoy, for example, in 1838 was taken from his home and killed by a band of men who found his opinions on slavery unacceptable. The newspapers of the country frequently published articles regarding the Mormon prophet. These articles, supposedly true, depicted the Mormon leader as a pretended prophet who held unusual opinions on a variety of subjects. He was charged with violating the separation of church and state, practicing unusual marriage customs, allowing himself to be ordained king in a land dedicated to equality and freedom, and violating his sacred Masonic vows, to name only a few of his "unusual ideas." Attempts to capture and forcefully return the Prophet to Missouri caused him to extend the jurisdiction and power of the municipal court, which effectuated the accusation that he was using this judicial tribunal to circumvent legally constituted authority. In an environment which tolerated and even encouraged technically illegal activities, it was comparatively easy to convince men, in view of alleged Mormon disregard for law and because they reportedly held unusual beliefs, that only quasi-legal *modus operandi* would be adequate.

Another related factor was alleged Mormon lawlessness. Continual rumors were circulated specifying that Nauvoo headquartered a den of thieves, was the center of a counterfeiting ring and was filled with ruthless lawbreakers. Such reports seem to have given people a moral excuse to band together and oppress the Saints living in settlements surrounding
the Mormon stronghold. The resulting eruptions caused the Mormons to retaliate, producing even greater problems.

The assault on the life of ex-governor Boggs was pointed to by many Gentiles as a visible example of Mormon proneness for violence. That the assailant was never apprehended played into the hands of antagonists who were continually able to cast suspicion upon the character of Joseph Smith. Many individuals seriously questioned the Prophet's moral qualities because the assaulter had not been captured. A large number of people were convinced that Joseph Smith had ordered "the destroying angel" to attack Boggs in fulfillment of an alleged public prophecy which otherwise might not have come to pass. Citizens who usually obeyed the law were morally indignant because of the Prophet's apparent disregard for life and believed themselves ethically justified in actively working outside the law in attempting to punish the Mormon leader.

The Prophet's order as mayor to destroy the Nauvoo Expositor became a rallying point for action both legal and illegal against him. Editors published articles accusing the Mormon leader of opposing freedom of the press. Those involved in publishing that anti-Mormon newspaper publicly stated that not only was the press illegally destroyed, but their lives had been threatened, forcing them to flee Nauvoo. Such reports only intensified public feeling that the Mormons opposed law and order and that because of their great power, only extra-legal means would be sufficient to destroy this alien religion.
Lawless bands, attempting to bring about the downfall of the Mormon leader, were further justified in their own minds as reports continued to circulate regarding the Nauvoo Legion. Each muster, parade or mock battle of that organization caused speculation regarding the ultimate designs of its leaders. Rumors accusing Joseph Smith of plotting an attack on Texas, Mexico, Missouri and the United States were incessantly printed in newspapers and disseminated by word of mouth throughout the country. Some individuals believed the Nauvoo Legion would have to be destroyed before it had grown so strong that opposition to it would be unthinkable. Citizens living in Missouri were especially fearful that the Mormons would assault their homes and cities in retribution for the losses they had suffered in that state in 1837 and 1838. At least a few Missourians attempted and apparently succeeded in animating some Illinois citizens with whom they united in actively opposing by word and deed The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. This lawless tradition of the frontier was one of the major factors in bringing about the death of the Mormon Prophet and the expulsion of his followers from the state of Illinois.

Politics was another major factor in arousing opposition to the Church and its leaders. Numbers alone dictated that the Latter-day Saints would be a political power and the Mormons used this puissance to elect their friends and vanquish their antagonists. Elections in Hancock County were for the most part fought on a Mormon vs. non-Mormon basis, and candidates who publicly and vigorously attacked the Church
and its leaders after 1841 usually suffered resounding defeats. The Anti-Mormon Party organized in an attempt to unite all other citizens in the county to countervail the influence of Joseph Smith and his followers. The activities of members of this party proved ultimately to be one of the most decisive forces in arousing public feeling against the Mormons as a people.

When Church leaders learned that the leading candidates for the presidency in 1844 would not seriously consider measures for repaying the Saints for losses incurred while living in Missouri, Joseph Smith was sought and nominated for the office of president of the United States. His platform, energetic campaign, and seeming earnestness in doing all he could to acquire the nation's highest office aroused the public. Meetings were convened, arguments presented, conclusions reached and individuals selected to prevent the Prophet from taking the oath of office. Rumors reoccurring constantly that he had been ordained "king of the world" by the Council of Fifty, only incensed the populace and his untimely death became even more certain. Astute observers of Mormon politics accused the Prophet of telling his people how to vote. That most of the ballots in Nauvoo were cast for the same candidates, was cited as proof of the above assertion. Gentiles argued that in America people should be allowed to vote as their conscience, not a Prophet, dictated. Further antagonism developed because of close Mormon affiliation with the Democratic Party. Whigs became more disgruntled with the members of the Church and its leaders until they
finally came out in open opposition to the Saints, and behind the scenes did all in their power to destroy the "Mormon Democrats of Hancock County." Enough anti-Mormon Democrats joined their ranks to successfully enable them to achieve their goals.

The fact that Joseph Smith simultaneously served as president of the Church, mayor of Nauvoo, lieutenant general of the Nauvoo Legion, judge of the municipal court and was actively involved with leading Democrats, only intensified resentment against him. Many people believed he was violating the separation of church and state, and some even charged, incorrectly, that he was opposed to religious freedom. Thus Mormon involvement in politics was a major factor in causing conflict in Nauvoo.

A fourth leading factor in bringing about the clash between Mormons and Gentiles was the anti-Mormon activities of former members of the Church. John C. Bennett, after his excommunication from the Church, became a dedicated enemy, a vigorous protagonist and an effective inciter of public sentiment. He accused Joseph Smith of being immoral, contending that he was no longer suitable to receive communication from God. Further shadows were cast on the Prophet's character with such disclosures by Bennett as the Prophet's alleged instructions to Porter Rockwell to assassinate ex-governor Boggs of Missouri and his published affidavits charging Joseph Smith with the attempted seduction of several women in Nauvoo.

Other strong-willed, energetic ex-Mormons united to oppose Joseph and Hyrum Smith. These men, led by the Law brothers, opposed
the Prophet's economic policies, his secret marriage system, his so-called dictorial powers and many of his more radical religious doctrines. These men publicized certain Mormon doctrines not considered compatible with American religious tradition. Most Americans were trinitarian in their concept of God, endorsing creeds which stipulated that God the Father, Christ the Son, and the Holy Ghost were three persons in one substance, yet were not three gods, but one God. Although a few Americans such as Thomas Jefferson, believed this doctrine was numerically an impossibility, most Christians were content to leave the complexities of the three-in-one doctrine for the theologians to resolve. When Joseph Smith preached publicly an unusual plurality of gods concept, many individuals thought his doctrine blasphemous, giving them another excuse to oppose the Mormon leader. Other doctrines such as the gathering, scriptural authenticity of the Book of Mormon, the Hebraic chosen origin and quality of the American Indian and the secret nature of the temple ceremony, were publicly preached by former Mormons as evidence that the Mormon leader should be overthrown.

Several apostates lectured against Mormonism, published books to countervail the influence of the Church in Illinois and met with Mormon-haters in attempting to advance their own designs and oppose those of the Prophet. Non-Mormons who believed the charges of these men concluded the Saints were a group of unlearned, licentious dupes, unable to think for themselves. They further believed that the Saints were led by a religious dictator who violated the separation of church
and state, religious liberty, economic freedom, private property and the sacred structure of society itself, the family. Since polygamy was unannounced yet practiced, credance was given to the claims of former Mormons which cast even more doubt upon the Prophet's character. It become almost impossible to overstress the role excindled Mormons played in arousing people against the leaders of the Church.

Another factor, of less importance, in the clash between Mormons and Gentiles in Illinois was economics. Because of its rapid growth, both physically and economically, Nauvoo was considered by a number of observers to be the most prosperous community in Illinois. This success was magnified when compared to other cities in the state which were experiencing at this time a serious depression. Yet several Church leaders, taking advantage of the new national bankruptcy law, declared themselves insolvent. Those holding mortgages or notes involving Church leaders demanded payment but were checked by the law, causing such people to use other than legal means to obtain payment. The Prophet and others justified themselves by contending they had lost land and property in Ohio and Missouri for which they had received no remuneration and argued that if the Missourians would pay the $300,000 debt owed to the Saints, they would gladly make good their obligations. Since no-one reimbursed them for such losses, there was little they could do but declare themselves bankrupt. Still, many people seemed certain that somehow these Church leaders were not as honorable as they might have been in meeting their financial obligations. According to one
report, Joseph Smith had amassed a fortune of just short of a million dollars. With this kind of publicity circulating, it is not difficult to understand that economics was at the root of some of the Saint's problems in Illinois.

Another factor precipitating conflict was the Prophet's conviction that belonging to the Masonic order might protect him from an experience similar to the one he had endured with his followers in Missouri. He also believed he would obtain the brotherhood and companionship of prominent men, not members of the Church, by Masonic affiliation. Yet, a seeming over-enthusiasm for the Masons caused members of that organization to engage behind the scenes in bringing about the death of the Prophet and his brother. That Joseph Smith's distress signal was ignored by Masons in the "mob" which took his life, was justified, they said, because he had broken his Masonic vows. At the time of his death, the Prophet was charged with initiating women into the Masonic order, with attempting to seduce Master Mason's wives and daughters and finally of imitating Masonic ritual by introducing a temple endowment. That he was innocent of some of these charges did little to stem the tide against him. His cry, "Oh Lord My God," seems to have aroused no sympathy; and shortly after uttering this portion of the Masonic distress signal, he fell to the earth a dead man.

Perhaps in retrospect both Mormons and non-Mormons were to blame for conflict which developed between them. The Mormons were sometimes boastful of their political and economic power, frequently
declared they were the chosen people of God, tended to trade in a commercial way only with themselves, promulgated a large army and engaged in a marriage system thought by Gentiles to be adulterous. The Gentiles blamed the Mormons for almost every crime committed in Hancock County, said Joseph Smith was a dictator and believed themselves justified in opposing him without examining the truth or falsity of the numerous accusations.

Ex-Mormons and many non-members of the Church organized into anti-Mormon groups which passed resolutions, petitioned the governor, obtained weapons, and finally organized to drive the Mormons from the state. The Saints, who were still mourning the loss of their Prophet, met with Gentile leaders and agreed to leave the state without further bloodshed. Warrants pending for the arrest of Brigham Young and other leaders on charges of counterfeiting was one of many reasons the Saints left the "City of Joseph" in February, 1846, rather than in March or April as originally proposed.

A religious people who had entered Illinois in 1839 homeless, destitute and sorrowing for loved ones left buried on the northern Missouri plains were homeless once again in 1846. Grieving because two graves contained the bodies of their founder and his brother, they little realized the number of graves that would dot the trail from Iowa to the Great Basin and the suffering and hardships that awaited their arrival in the Rocky Mountains. The peace and religious freedom they sought was not to be fully attained in their lifetime and it was not until
the twentieth century that their children became a respected segment of American life.
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