

---

---

## TURNING THE TIME OVER TO . . .

---

---

Samuel W. Taylor

# AUNTY-MORMON I AIN'T, NOR ANTE-MORMON NEITHER



I wonder just how history can be revised. Either something happened or it didn't, or it didn't in the way we may wish it had.

OSCAR WILDE SAID, "The only duty we owe history is to rewrite it." And you all know this familiar quotation, "Of all glad words of tongue or pen, the gladdest are these—rewrite what has been."

### AUNTY-MORMONS

ONCE received a list of LDS books that a man was selling from his personal library. Among some 300 titles were two of my own books—a happy surprise because they are out of print. Strangely, *Rocky Mountain Em-*

*SAM TAYLOR is a well known Mormon writer living in Redwood City, CA. This paper was presented to the 1989 Sunstone Symposium West in Concord, California.*

*pire and The Kingdom or Nothing* were listed under "FUNDAMENTALIST AND ANTI-MORMON MATERIALS." How come? They were handled by Deseret Book stores and the Brigham Young University Library—two places that are not exactly notorious for dispensing that kind of literature. However, I was in pretty good company. Under this heading were *Joseph Smith's 1832-34 Diary*, *Joseph Smith's History by his Mother*, and *The Seer* by Orson Pratt. Now there's anti-Mormon and fundamentalist stuff for you, by golly.

*The Journal of Discourses* was among the titles on the okay list, and I wonder if he knows what's in them? There is so much "sensitive" stuff in those volumes that for years they were suppressed. Even the Salt Lake Public Library wouldn't let you take a

peek at them. The fundamentalists began reprinting them, one at a time, and then the Church took the bull by the horns and published them again. And what do you know, the roof didn't fall in.

Also listed was James R. Clark's *Messages of the First Presidency*. He doesn't realize they contain about a dozen manifestos after the official one in 1890, the final one being in 1933, not to mention the Doctrine and Covenants. Hasn't he read Section 132?

There's David Whitmer's "An Address to all Believers in Christ"—the very item which turned Jerald and Sandra Tanner into dedicated Aunty-Mormons who have dedicated their lives to demolishing the Church with their many publications.

*The Glory of Mormonism* by John J. Stewart might seem safe enough, but did the owner open it to discover that Stewart lists by name, rank and serial number 53 wives of Brigham Young? Here we also find that Ann Eliza Webb Young, who divorced Brigham, wasn't *Wife Number 19*, as she herself supposed, nor was she *The Twenty-Seventh Wife*, as Irving Wallace claimed, but was number 51.

Parley P. Pratt's *Autobiography* is available, an absolutely delightful book, still in print after more than a century. But didn't the guy take a gander at the Appendix, which contains the names of Pratt's twelve wives and twenty children?

Another of the okay books, J. Max Anderson's *The Polygamy Story: Fiction and Fact*, is touted as "reply to fundamentalists". Anderson devotes a total of 157 pages to deriding, ridiculing, and utterly demolishing the revelation received by President John Taylor in September 1886. This book caused me to write Anderson on 27 May 1979:

Perhaps you know that I have published several books on the subject. My last three, *Nightfall at Nauvoo*, *The Kingdom or Nothing*, and *The Rocky Mountain Empire*, traced plural marriage both above ground and under ground from its inception until its final abandonment.

Our positions are so far apart that I am sure we have no common meeting ground. . . . However, in deriding the entire story of the John Taylor revelation of September 1886, I wonder if you are aware of a talk delivered during conference, April 1978, by President Spencer W. Kimball. It was published in the *Ensign*, May 1978. The final paragraph is as follows: "I know that God lives. I know that Jesus Christ

lives,' said John Taylor, my predecessor, 'for I have seen him.' I bear this testimony to you brethren in the name of Jesus Christ, Amen."

Inasmuch as, to my knowledge, President John Taylor claimed to have been visited by Jesus Christ on only one occasion, the night of 26-27 September 1886, I wonder if you include President Kimball among those deluded by the story of that night?

It must be understood that this revelation by John Taylor has become the Magna Carta of the Fundamentalists. Consequently, officially it doesn't exist and isn't in the Church Archives. However, my brother Raymond found eleven copies of it in a department of the archives which also doesn't officially exist. These copies were made by various people, including a Church historian, and bore the notation, "copied from the original". So, while it doesn't exist, quite obviously great care is being taken that it mustn't get lost.

As to Max Anderson, I understand that his research had convinced him of the authenticity of the revelation, but that he was "persuaded" to publish his tirade—which would, in my opinion, class him as a cast-iron aunty-Mormon. In case you have wondered, an aunty-Mormon is one who is embarrassed by and would love to forget the "aunts" of our history—the polygamists' other wives.

During my childhood, I had one mother and five aunts, all married to my father. Far from being embarrassed, all thirty-six of his children were proud of having been born in the Principle, a boon now verboten. We believed that those entering the awesome responsibilities inherent in such marriages would be blessed by choice spirits being given them in their children. While the system worked fine seven times in my mother's family, I'm afraid I somehow fell through the cracks. But after all, there is usually a runt in every litter, and I felt that I was in choice company among my superior siblings.

#### ANTE-MORMONS

**I**N a sequel to the Max Anderson saga, I received a letter from a friend, Romel Mackelprang, dated 30 June 1985:

I wrote to President Kimball in reference to his closing remarks and testimony reported in the May 1978 issue of the *Ensign*, wherein he refers to the experience of President John Taylor personally seeing

Christ. . . . Please find enclosed copy of the letter from the Office of the President in answer to my inquiry.

What are your thoughts regarding the answer?

The letter from President Kimball's secretary, D. Arthur Haycock, said:

Your letter dated June 18, 1985, to President Kimball has been received and he has asked that I respond in his behalf as he is not feeling well.

With reference to President Kimball's statement regarding John Taylor made in the Priesthood session of the April 1978 General Conference, in a very human way, President Kimball mis-spoke and said "John Taylor," when in reality he meant to say "Lorenzo Snow."

In reply, on 3 July 1985, I wrote Mackelprang:

Now, if you believe the LDS Church President ad libs on network TV, you'll believe anything . . . . If President Kimball goofed on TV, why was his goof printed in the *Ensign*? I'll tell you what happened. It was my letter to Max Anderson. My spies reported that the xerox machines ran night and day making copies. A copy was rushed to the top. And so now Kimball really meant Lorenzo Snow, not John Taylor. Oh, sure. His ringing testimony to Jesus Christ was just a goof! Oh, sure.

This, it seems, is a classic case of ante-Mormon second thoughts. I suspect that until I wrote to Max Anderson, Salt Lake didn't realize the implications of President Kimball's statement regarding John Taylor, that it verified the controversial revelation of September 1886. I've heard that conference talks are carefully combed and edited before being published in the *LDS Church News* or the *Ensign*. I knew a man on the staff of the *Church News* who was in the doghouse for years because on one occasion, when up against a deadline, he published a conference talk as spoken without waiting for it to be edited and approved. I don't see how President Kimball's statement about John Taylor could ever have remained uncorrected and be printed in the *Ensign* if he really meant to say Lorenzo Snow.

**W**HEN I was growing up in Provo in the twenties, our neighbors included people who were quietly living the Principle. The

bishop of our ward was married to an "old maid" who lived around the corner. Considerable numbers of polygamous Saints had left the Mexican colonies because of a revolution there, and quite a few had settled in town. They were latter-day plural families. My mother knew many of them, having spent time in Mexico during the U.C. (unlawful cohabitation) hunts. Later, when I was a student at Brigham Young University, two members of the faculty had embraced the Principle—one was a secret wife and the other a man who had three wives. Neither was bothered by the authorities, nor will I name them now.

I was given a copy of a letter by Paul B. Cannon to his children about his father, John M. Cannon, "who married in polygamy in 1900," yet was first counselor to Stake President Frank Y. Taylor. At John M. Cannon's funeral, 16 June 1917, "my mother, his first wife, 'Aunt' Margaret, his second wife, and 'Aunt' Hattie, his third wife, sat side by side on the front row with family and relatives," Paul Cannon wrote. Among the speakers at the services were President Joseph F. Smith, his counselor Charles W. Penrose, Apostle Orson F. Whitney, and Stake President Frank Y. Taylor. "These talks were very personal and gave praise to John M. Cannon."

Among those taking latter-day wives, "Frank Y. Taylor was a polygamist along with some 13 others with whom I was well acquainted and who had never been excommunicated or disfellowshipped. Most of these men held responsible positions in the Church."

Incidentally, Frank Y. Taylor was my father's brother. He lived to a ripe old age, and sometimes called on me when traveling about giving talks about the presidents of the Church. He had personally known them all, except Joseph Smith: Brigham Young, John Taylor, Wilford Woodruff, Lorenzo Snow, Joseph F. Smith, Heber J. Grant, and, if I remember correctly, George Albert Smith.

Liberals generally recognize two classes of Saints—the iron rodders and the Liahonas. A subclass of the former is the Cast-Iron Rodders. These have faith like cast iron—hard, non-malleable, rigid, unyielding. It cannot be forged or rolled, but it's brittle and breakable. It can be shattered by a single blow, such as by problems with the Book of Abraham, by David Whitmer's "An Address to All Believers of Christ," by testimony at the Smoot Hearings, by the tales of Mark Hofmann, the consummate forger, by the fact that more than 60 percent of the *History of the Church* by Joseph Smith, known as the *Documentary History of the Church* (DHC), was

written after Joseph's death, or by the fact that there have been almost 4,000 changes in "the most correct book on earth," The Book of Mormon.

The Cast Iron-Rodders know all the answers to the unanswerable. They require that every single facet of their faith be absolutely "true;" otherwise nothing is. They walk a precarious tightrope. If shattered, they may throw the baby out with the bathwater. All too often they eagerly accept ante-Mormon evidence. Ante-Mormon material is, typically, journals which have been altered in the light of subsequent events, or letters never sent.

For example, when I published an article which explored the medical evidence that Brigham Young didn't die from eating green corn and peaches, nor from appendicitis, but that several doctors, internists, and pathologists—after studying the symptoms of his week-long illness—said that death resulted from arsenic poisoning, the Cast-Iron Rodders produced ante-Mormon evidence to refute it. One positive proof was the journal of Seymour B. Young, Brigham's nephew and one of the doctors attending Brigham's last sickness. In his journal of 24 August 1877, five days before Brigham's death, there is a *pencil* notation in Seymour Young's journal: "appendix broke." How did he know? This proves that Brigham Young's death was due to a ruptured appendix, doesn't it? Well, what is remarkable about that notation is that in 1877 a ruptured appendix wasn't known to be a cause of peritonitis—called at that time "inflammation of the bowels." In fact, it wasn't until 1886, nine years later, that Reginold Fitz, professor of pathogenic anatomy at Harvard, gave the pioneer paper on the subject.<sup>1</sup>

Other ante-Mormon journals aren't confined to personal matters but include historical records corrected for posterity. History as it should have been. For example, we have exactly opposite accounts of what happened regarding the charges of the alleged treachery of Sidney Rigdon during the October 1843 conference at Nauvoo. On Saturday, Joseph Smith accused Sidney of betrayal and being in league with his enemies. "He stated that, in consequence of these and other circumstances, and Elder Rigdon's unprofitableness to him as a Counselor, he did not wish to retain him in that station." The next day, Sunday, according to the *Documentary History of the Church*, "President Joseph Smith arose and explained to the congregation the supposed treacherous correspondence of ex-Governor Carlin, and expressed entire lack of confidence in his [Rigdon's] integrity and

steadfastness, judging from their past intercourse." When "the conference voted that Elder Sidney Rigdon be permitted to retain his station as Counselor in the First Presidency, President Joseph Smith arose and said, 'I have thrown him off my shoulders, and you have again put him on me. You may carry him, but I will not.'"<sup>2</sup>

Compare this with the contemporary account in the *Times and Seasons*, the Church paper at Nauvoo. On Sunday it says, "President Joseph Smith arose and satisfactorily explained to the congregation the supposed treacherous correspondence with ex-Governor Carlin, which wholly removed suspicion from Elder Sidney Rigdon, and from every other person. He expressed entire willingness to have Sidney Rigdon retain his station."<sup>3</sup> Quite obviously, the DHC version is ante-dated, nor is this by any means the only significant "correction" of Church history. The industrious Gerald and Sandra Tanner issued a book, *Changes in Joseph Smith's History*, documenting more than "62,000 words added or deleted": However, they missed the above hatchet job on Rigdon.

ON 1 April 1845 Brigham Young noted, "I have commenced revising the history of Joseph Smith at Brother [Willard] Richards' office; Elder Heber C. Kimball and George A. Smith were with me." The revision continued until 29 December. On 28 November, a typical entry said, "At the Historian's Office with Elder George A. Smith and revised 50 pages history."<sup>4</sup> I wonder just *how* history can be revised? Either something happened or it didn't, or it didn't in the way we may wish it had.

Ante-Mormon history still rides high in the saddle. A friend recently drew my attention to an article in which Kenneth L. Cannon says,

In 1911 a policy was proposed to the effect that marriages performed before 1904 would be recognized as valid by the Church . . . . However, when John W. Taylor was reinstated posthumously in 1965, the decision was made not to have the sealings restored between Taylor and his last three wives (two whom he married in 1901). Delbert L. Stapley wrote Taylor's son, Raymond; "It is a rule followed by the Genealogical Society that if a marriage took place after the manifesto, that such marriages are not recognized nor will permission be given to seal such women to the

man she or they were supposedly sealed to. Regardless of the sincere purpose of the women they, as well as your father, were in violation of the civil law and the law of the Church."

That was 4 June 1966. Subsequently, Henry E. Christiansen then wrote Raymond on 2 February 1967 and affirmed what Elder Stapley had written. In reply, I wrote my friend,

I have heard from my sister Juana, daughter of my father's last wife, Ellen, and I am convinced that the letters written by Delbert Stapley and Henry Christiansen are examples of ante-Mormon literature . . . [following] a hoary tradition that has existed ever since polygamy was begun by the Saints in 1831. On the face of it, if Stapley wrote to Raymond, why was it necessary for Christiansen to remind Raymond of the fact? I fear they protesteth too much.

Juana wrote that she knew nothing about such letters. She also said that two of her mother's sisters were latter-day wives—one having entered the principle in 1920—and that both had been subsequently sealed to their husband, with Juana standing proxy. It hadn't been necessary to seal her mother to her father.

The three latter-day wives of my father remained in good standing during their lifetime, firm in the faith, up in their tithes, and with temple recommends. Their children received no hint that they themselves were in outer darkness. The women became active in Relief Society, genealogical research, and temple work, and the men held positions as bishops, in bishoprics, in high councils, and marriages were in the temple.

Also, if I *am* wrong, if those two letters were mailed to Raymond, I must ask exactly *why* were they sent to Raymond and not to *me*? I was the one who started the ball rolling by writing a letter to President Hugh B. Brown asking him what steps might be taken to obtain the reinstatement of my father. I met with the First Presidency on 11 May 1965, and the reinstatement was approved. I then wrote the letter to present to the Twelve for their sustaining vote. It was approved 13 May 1965. Raymond on 21 May stood proxy while Joseph Fielding Smith performed the ordinance restoring John W. Taylor to his former priesthood, office, and blessings. The Stapley/Christiansen letters also contradict the official verdict of the Genealogical Society.

Nearly two years after the reinstatement, the final determination was made. The nub of the problem was this: While John W. Taylor had been officially forgiven, could the modern Church recognize the validity of marriages performed after the Manifesto? Rather than "opening Pandora's box," the decision was that "if the Lord should judge Brother Taylor in being justified in his last three marriages, he can adjust it in the realms beyond the grave." This was exactly in accordance with my father's sentiments in the matter. And this official action came subsequent to the Stapley/Christiansen letters.

The John W. Taylor case has wheels within wheels. Although he was officially unchurched and delivered unto the buffetings of Satan, until her death my mother continued to receive a monthly check from Salt Lake, as she had before the action was taken. As a boy I bicycled the check down to the Farmers and Merchants Bank in Provo, with instructions to deposit it with Brother Olson and nobody else.

More wheels within wheels: It is a fact that despite the present-day condemnation of plural marriage, it is still being practiced with official sanction in a most peculiar manner. Women are being sealed as plural wives to dead men, in order to obtain the celestial glory in the hereafter. Men are being sealed to dead women for the same reason. The sealings were done properly, a proxy standing for the dead spouse.

But even so, as a final commentary on this subject, we must remember that the Manifesto said that the practice of the Principle was being suspended because it was against the laws of the land. Okay. But is it also against the laws of heaven? If so, the likes of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob have had a lot of fast repenting to do.

In *Jeanot et Colin*, Voltaire said, "All our history is no more than accepted fiction." One of our most cherished fictions is that Mormons of a past day had exactly the same attitudes, beliefs, habits, and practices as we do today. The only difference is that men wore beards and women, sunbonnets. Oh, yes, and they didn't drive cars. I am amazed, astonished, and appalled at the lengths to which ante-Mormons will go to distort, deny, discredit, and even to denigrate and ridicule our unique history. We must understand that with the Manifesto of 1890, the Church ceased the practice of plural marriage, but the priesthood authority took it underground, as had been the case in Kirtland, Missouri, Nauvoo, and pioneer Utah until 1852.

The situation following the 1890 Man-

ifesto was called the Grand Conspiracy, and my father was one of hundreds of men set apart to foster it. The apparatus and authority of the Grand Conspiracy stemmed from President John Taylor. In 1882 he issued an epistle "On Marriage," which authorized marriages outside the Endowment House and temple. Two years later, in 1884, he testified under oath at the trial of Ruderger Clawson that he had personally set apart hundreds of men with authority to perform such marriages at any place convenient. Then in 1886 he received the revelation that the law of God would never change and those "who would enter my glory must and shall obey my law."

Yes, the Grand Conspiracy failed. It had absolutely no chance for success, but the concept was grand, and the people involved obeyed their calling without question, without counting the risks or the costs—just as did those called to other futile missions: the

silk mission, the iron mission, the cotton mission, the wine mission, the flax mission, the wool mission, the sugar mission—just as did those who obeyed call after call, time after time, to pick up and leave homes, farms, investments, friends, families, jobs, businesses, professions, to pioneer again and again the raw wilderness through Utah and Arizona, throughout Deseret and into Mexico. This is our heritage.

I, for one, will apologize for none of such people, nor for any part of it. ☞

## NOTES

1. Reginald Fitz, "Perforating Inflammation of the Vermiform Appendix: With Special Reference to Its Early Diagnosis and Treatment," in Davis-Christopher, *Textbook of Surgery* (Sanders Co., 1977) 11th ed.
2. *Documentary History of the Church*, 6:48-49.
3. *Times and Seasons*, 4:330.
4. *Documentary History of the Church*, 7:389.
5. *Documentary History of the Church*, 7:532.
6. Kenneth L. Cannon II, "After the Manifesto: Mormon Polygamy 1890-1906," *SUNSTONE* 8:1&2 (January-April 1983): 27-35.

---



---

## PSALM

### CHIASM TO GOD THE MOTHER

Oh, Mama, Mama,  
Not my first word  
But at last I speak.  
Born of you  
Blind to you  
Dumb for you  
And for all who hunger  
For your sweet sound.  
But now I open my mouth  
And my mouth will not be silenced.  
Never will my mouth  
Cease to speak  
Elohimama the hidden half of heaven  
To by sisters and brothers  
And to you, oh surely to you.  
And speaking to you, I see you  
The beautiful birther of all.  
At last I speak  
What should have been my first word  
Oh, Mama, Mama.

— CAROL LYNN PEARSON