The Myth-maker of Mormon Fundamentalism:

How Lorin Woolley Transformed History into Myth

1. Introduction

President Lorin Woolley's eyes burned, and tears streamed down his wrinkled cheeks. He listened as they dripped from his beard and splashed in the wash basin at his feet. He took off his tear-splattered vest and wrapped a white towel around his waist. Slowly, ceremoniously, he washed the feet of each of his six disciples. When he had completed the washings he fastened his eyes on Joseph Leslie Broadbent and announced, "Brother Leslie, you are now to take charge until I come back."1

Perhaps at this November 1933 meeting he rehearsed to his followers once more what has become known as the Lorin Woolley Story - his explanation of how he obtained the keys of the Priesthood. The Story as Lorin told it in the notarized 1929 account (the "official" version) runs as follows. In the mid-1880's the US made war with the Saints of God. They sent marshals to crusade against all who lived celestial or plural marriage. Many of the faithful, polygamous brethren went into hiding. John Taylor, then president of the Church, concealed himself in the home of Lorin's father, John W. Woolley. While he resided there, scores of weak-kneed 'Saints' wrote to him, demanding that he surrender plural marriage and strike a deal with the government. Some of them met clandestinely and got up a "manifesto" abolishing plural marriage. On September 26th, 1886 they presented it to President Taylor for his approval. The president called together a number of people to discuss the proposed "manifesto." Among the number was Lorin Woolley, who had just returned from a hazardous three day mission President Taylor had sent him on.

Lorin and the others could reach no definite conclusion regarding the proposed compromise.

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John Taylor stood four-square against it, but he agreed to take the matter up with the Lord that evening.

President Taylor asked Lorin to stand guard for him that night and then retired to his room alone. Lorin leaned against the president's door and began reading the Doctrine and Covenants. Suddenly, he was startled by the sound of three distinct voices in the room behind him. He sprang to his feet and spun around. The president's room lit up like the sun had dropped into it - brilliant light shot out from under the door. Lorin watched and listened all night. At sunrise the voices ceased and the light extinguished.

When President Taylor emerged from the room his face shined so brightly Lorin could scarcely look at him. He announced, "I have just had a very pleasant conversation all night with the Prophet Joseph Smith." When Lorin inquired about the third voice he had heard, the president told him, "That was your Lord and Savior Jesus Christ." The president then assembled the whole household and preached to them on plural marriage and the proposed "manifesto." He put each person present under covenant that they would never relinquish plural marriage.

President Taylor was so full of the Spirit of God that he actually rose one or two feet off the floor and floated in mid-air, shouting, 'Sign that manifesto - never! I'd rather have my right arm torn from its socket!' The eighty year old prophet then preached for eight hours straight. He prophesied that the seventh President of the Church (Heber J. Grant) would abandon many divine laws. He further prophesied that three quarters of the Saints would follow the seventh president, like children listening to the pied piper, into apostasy and bondage; but the Lord would save His church by sending the "one mighty and strong" to set the house of God back in order.

President Taylor then sat down and wrote out the gist of the instructions Christ had given him the previous night - what is now known as the 1886 Revelation. The revelation instructed

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Taylor never to abandon "the new and everlasting covenant of marriage" and informed him that no man can be exalted unless he does "the works of Abraham." President Taylor told those present that they would forget much of what happened at this meeting but the Spirit of God would bring it back to their minds.

That evening he took five of them aside and commissioned them to carry on plural marriage until the Savior comes again. The five were George Q. Cannon, Charles H. Wilcken, Samuel Bateman, John W. Woolley, and Lorin C. Woolley. Before their very eyes the resurrected Prophet Joseph Smith appeared. He and President Taylor laid their hands on each of the five and ordained them apostles and members of the highest Priesthood quorum, the Council of Friends.

Lorin established his own authority and that of his disciples on the above story. Under the authority he allegedly received from John Taylor, Lorin ordained six to the Council of Friends and commissioned them to perpetuate plural marriage forever.²

If Lorin did relate this story to his followers at the above-described meeting, then it was the last time he ever did so. Before his Council of Friends could reconvene, Lorin suffered a debilitating stroke. He lingered in pain for several months, declining steadily. Lorin C. Woolley finally succumbed to death on September 19, 1934; but he left his followers a bequest - a myth, a powerful myth that would form the core of an entire new mythology and the basis of a new religious community. The Lorin Woolley Story is that myth.³

II. Lorin Woolley's Patterns of Truth-Distortion

Lorin shaped the actions, the worldview - the lives - of his followers by telling them stories. He told them stories about prophets, stories about apostates, stories about angels, and, frequently, stories about himself. But Lorin's stories about himself evolved into something more than personal
adventure tales, they became a new mythology.

Where did Lorin get these legends? He created them by interweaving historical fact and fantasy. Often, he projected himself into historical events he did not participate in. He also included his hearers' relatives in his stories, inserting them into historical narratives, or spinning brand new tales about them. He embellished his stories over time, stretching and expanding on the truth. He also combined separate historical events into a single story.

A. Always at the Center of the Story

Lorin Woolley often claimed he had played a central role in events he had participated in peripherally or not at all. Events for which he fabricated a role for himself include the reinstatement of deposed apostle Albert Carrington, Joseph F. Smith's attempt to examine Joseph Smith's Bible manuscript, and the writing of the Woodruff Manifesto on plural marriage.

1. The Reinstatement of Albert Carrington

When Mormon apostle Albert Carrington returned from his long mission to England he was excommunicated by his fellow apostles for "lewd and lascivious conduct" and adultery. In the ensuing years Carrington frequently begged his former associates to readmit him to the Church. Eventually, they acquiesced and allowed him to be rebaptized and reconfirmed.⁴

In one of his weekly meetings with the Council of Friends, Lorin Woolley professed intimate knowledge of the Carrington case. He claimed that Carrington had been unjustly excommunicated for marrying a few women as "concubines," without a formal ceremony. Lorin further claimed that he and the Salt Lake Stake president, Angus M. Cannon, rebaptized and reconfirmed Carrington six months before he died.⁵

Lorin claimed an insider's knowledge of the Carrington case, but he displayed a tremendous
ignorance of its details. Carrington was not excommunicated for taking "concubines;" he was excommunicated because several women accused him of "lewd and lascivious conduct" and he confessed his guilt. Furthermore, Lorin Woolley could not have rebaptized or reconfirmed Carrington six months before his death for two reasons: first, six months before Carrington's death Lorin Woolley was serving a mission in Indian Territory; second, church records show that Carrington was reinstated two years before his death. Carrington's church records also reveal that he was rebaptized by John Tingey the day Lorin left on his mission and reconfirmed by Albert W. Davis three days later. Angus Cannon attempted to re-ordain an ailing Carrington to the priesthood on September 19, 1889; but when he arrived at Carrington's home, he found that the former apostle had just died. Lorin could not have accompanied Cannon: he did not return from Indian Territory until three weeks later. Plainly, Lorin Woolley fabricated his role in the reinstatement of Albert Carrington.

2. The Attempt to Check Joseph Smith's Bible Manuscript

While traveling to the Eastern States in 1878, Apostle Joseph F. Smith attempted to compare the original manuscript of Joseph Smith's New Translation of the Bible with the published version. He stopped in Plano, Illinois to compare the two documents and to visit his cousin and religious rival, Joseph Smith III (who had published the New Translation). Joseph Smith III was out of town, so Apostle Smith promised to try again on his way back to Utah.

Near the end of his life, Lorin Woolley claimed that in 1886 he and Joseph F. Smith had compared the published New Translation with the original manuscript and found substantive discrepancies between the two. The published version, he claimed, had been tampered with by the Reorganized LDS Church, over which Joseph Smith III presided. Lorin also claimed he had read in

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the manuscript details not found in the published version - that Jesus was crucified on a Friday and resurrected on a Sunday.9

By making these claims, Lorin demonstrated that he knew as little about the New Translation manuscript as he knew about Albert Carrington's reinstatement. Lorin did not examine the manuscript with Joseph F. Smith in 1886. He could not have: Joseph spent the entire year in Hawaii avoiding arrest for polygamy. Could Lorin Woolley have examined the manuscript with Joseph in 1878 and incorrectly identified the year as 1886? No. Lorin and Joseph could not have examined it together in 1878, for two reasons. First, Lorin did not accompany Joseph on his 1878 trips to Plano. Joseph's fellow-apostle, Orson Pratt, accompanied him on the first trip, and he traveled alone on the second trip. Second, when Apostle Smith arrived in Plano, Joseph Smith III refused to show him the manuscript. He apparently never showed him the manuscript. Joseph Smith III hated polygamy and continued to treat his polygamous cousin coldly until his death four decades later. Joseph F. Smith's family and followers mistrusted Joseph Smith III and the Bible he published, because he treated Joseph F. poorly and denied him access to the manuscript.10

Not until the early 1970's was a Latter-Day Saint allowed to examine the manuscript - and that Latter-Day Saint, Robert J. Matthews, discovered that Joseph Smith III and the RLDS Church had kept their published New Translation faithful to the original. And, contrary to Lorin Woolley's claim, Matthews found that the manuscript reveals no more about the days of Jesus's crucifixion and resurrection than the published version does.11

By disclosing the details of his trip with Joseph F. Smith, Lorin impressed his uninformed disciples but discredited himself in the eyes of those who know the history and content of the Joseph Smith Translation manuscript. Lorin was no more involved in Joseph F. Smith's attempt to examine that manuscript than he was in the reinstatement of Albert Carrington.

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3. The Writing of the Manifesto

A) Background

In September of 1890, Mormon Church president Wilford Woodruff revoked his church's long-standing endorsement of polygamy. For nearly forty years, Woodruff and other Mormon leaders had publicly encouraged their followers to practice polygamy. Many Mormon men had married polygamously - in obedience to their church leaders - and in defiance of Congress. Congress outlawed polygamy in 1861 and stepped up its efforts to eradicate polygamy in the 1880's. Congress seriously considered disincorporating the LDS Church, confiscating the Church's property, and disfranchising its members. In short, Congress threatened to destroy the LDS Church. Wilford Woodruff met this threat by "praying to the Lord" and, upon "feeling inspired by his spirit," drawing up a manifesto prohibiting new plural marriages. When he presented the "Woodruff Manifesto" at the Church's General Conference, the Saints accepted it as binding. From this time on the Church officially opposed new plural marriages.\(^{12}\)

Oddly, Lorin Woolley, who zealously promoted post-1890 polygamy, claimed he helped write the Manifesto. On April 9, 1922, Lorin told Joseph W. Musser that "he knew the Manifesto, because he helped to make it." Lorin convinced Musser and others that he possessed first-hand knowledge of how the Manifesto was written. Lorin's hearers evidently accepted his claim without demanding evidence in its favor.\(^{13}\)

B) The Lack of Evidence for Lorin's Claim

*Is there* any evidence in favor of Lorin's claim that he helped write the Manifesto? The only evidence in favor of Lorin's claim is his own testimony. Those who wrote and edited the Manifesto left detailed chronicles of its development, but failed to mention Lorin's involvement; and

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scholars who have researched the writing of the Manifesto have failed to discern any role Lorin might have played in its genesis.\textsuperscript{14}

C) Evidence Against Lorin's Claim

1) The Evidence of Actions

The author and editors of the Manifesto left no evidence in favor of his claim, but Lorin himself provided the evidence \textit{against} his claim. Lorin initially refused to support and later actively opposed the very document he claimed he "helped to make." Four months after he made this claim, Lorin admitted that he "refused to vote for" the Manifesto when it was presented at the Church's October 1890 General Conference.\textsuperscript{15} From 1912 until his death in 1934, Lorin zealously championed what the Manifesto was intended to prevent: new plural marriages. Lorin's actions - rejecting and fervently campaigning against the Manifesto - strongly militate against his claim that he helped write the Manifesto.

b. The Evidence of Words

1) Authorship

If Lorin provided evidence against his claim by his actions, he furnished the historian with a stockpile of it through his words. By divulging the alleged details of how the Manifesto was written, Lorin demonstrated that he knew no more about its composition than did the average Latter-Day Saint. Lorin misrepresented the origins of the Manifesto: he attributed it to the wrong authors, inaccurately described its composition, and distorted the motives and attitudes of its true author and editors.

Lorin told his compatriots that the Manifesto was not written by President Woodruff at God's behest; rather it was gotten up by uninspired men, at the insistence of spineless, materialistic "Saints." According to Lorin, rich Mormons pressured Wilford Woodruff to abandon polygamy,
crying, "We want a Manifesto or we will lose our property." Woodruff withstood the pressure to take the second course for a few years and then the wealthy "finally succeeded to get Pres. Woodruff to surrender to them." When he finally did "surrender," Woodruff delegated the task of writing the Manifesto to Apostle Charles W. Penrose (whom fundamentalists saw as an apostate), Frank J. Cannon (who later renounced Mormonism), "John H. White, the butcher," and the editor of the Deseret News - the latter because he could "write more and say less than any man in the Church." When these men completed the document they asked several federal officials - most of them anti-Mormons - to approve it. These officials modified the Manifesto and returned it to President Woodruff, who simply read over and signed it before it was published - so taught Lorin Woolley.  

By so teaching, Lorin demonstrated that he did not know who wrote the Manifesto. Contrary to Lorin's claims, Wilford Woodruff composed the first draft of the Manifesto on his own. Woodruff reported to John R. Winder that he spent a sleepless September night "struggling . . . with the Lord about what should be done under the existing circumstances of the Church. And," he said, presenting the Manifesto to Winder, "here is the result." Woodruff's counselour, George Q. Cannon, carefully recorded the details of the Manifesto's composition,  

because it is frequently the case that when important documents are framed there is a disposition to attribute their authority to one and another, and I have often been credited with saying and doing things which I did not say nor do.

Cannon wanted to make it clear that "the whole matter has been at President Woodruff's own instance," and he (Cannon) did nothing but "suggest alterations" in Woodruff's Manifesto. Cannon recorded that George Reynolds, John Winder, and Charles W. Penrose edited the document, and

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then Woodruff, his counselors, and the Twelve Apostles approved it. Lorin Woolley rightly asserted that Charles Penrose helped complete the Manifesto, but he wrongly identified every other author and editor of the Manifesto - and he failed to credit Wilford Woodruff with the primary role in its creation. 17

2) Motives and Attitudes

Lorin Woolley further betrayed his ignorance of the Manifesto's origins by ascribing the wrong motives and attitudes to its author, Wilford Woodruff, and his counselors, George Q. Cannon, and Joseph F. Smith. Lorin maintained that each of these men saw the Manifesto as he did: it was a man-made policy - a concession to the government, or a trick to keep the government off the Church's back. He either did not know that they each believed God inspired Woodruff to write the Manifesto, or he deliberately misrepresented their views. An examination of Lorin's account of Joseph F. Smith's views on the topic should suffice to show that Lorin did not know the attitudes of those closest to the Manifesto's author. 18

Lorin claimed that when Wilford Woodruff signed the finished Manifesto, but before the ink on the document was even dry he exclaimed regretfully, "My God, what have I done?" His counsellor, Joseph F. Smith, retorted, "You have entered into an agreement with death and hell." 19

Joseph F. Smith never described the Manifesto as an "agreement with death and hell." He approved the Manifesto, urged that it be voted in as an official Church policy, and called it a divinely "inspired rule of action." When he became the President of the Church, he reaffirmed the Manifesto's validity by issuing a "second Manifesto." 20

When President Smith issued this proclamation, John T. Clark, an insurance salesman from Provo, claimed Smith "would be destroyed from the earth" for supporting the Woodruff Manifesto, which Clark branded "a covenant with death and an agreement with hell." 21 Clark's local Church leaders concluded that he had apostatized from the LDS faith and excommunicated him. Indignant,
Clark appealed his case to the First Presidency. The First Presidency - composed of Joseph F. Smith, John R. Winder, and Anthon H. Lund - responded to Clark's appeal via a letter to Clark's stake president. They wrote that if a Church member branded the Woodruff Manifesto

'a covenant with death and an agreement with hell' . . . and he freely admit this before a High Council while on trial for his fellowship; the Council would be fully justified in excommunicating him without further testimony or argument.

They added that since the Manifesto was voted on and adopted by the Church, "consistency would suggest but one course to be taken by the party in question, that is, to either harmonize himself with the Church or withdraw from it." And they concluded with their decision, "In Brother Clark's case we see no grounds whatever for an appeal from the decision of the High Council."²²

In this letter President Smith clearly expressed his view that the Manifesto was not "a covenant with death and an agreement with hell," but a legitimate policy of the LDS Church. He even contended that anyone who viewed the Manifesto as Clark did disqualified himself from membership in the Church. Had President Smith shared Clark's views, he "consistency would [have] suggest[ed] but one course" he could take - "to withdraw from [the Church]" over which he presided. But Smith lived out the rest of his days faithful to his church - and he dedicated his last sermon, just weeks before he died, to reiterating the Manifesto.

If Joseph F. Smith completely rejected the view that the Manifesto was "a covenant with death and an agreement with hell," then why did Lorin Woolley attribute it to him? Lorin evidently imputed his own view of the Manifesto to President Smith to make it more credible to his hearers. Years prior to the meeting where he attributed this quote to Smith, Lorin Woolley befriended the excommunicated John T. Clark and the two exchanged religious ideas. Clark adopted some of

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Lorin's ideas and incorporated them in his book, *The One Mighty and Strong*. Evidently, Lorin in turn embraced some of Clark's views, including his equation of the scriptural "covenant with death" and "agreement with hell" with the Woodruff Manifesto. After Lorin embraced John T. Clark's view of the Manifesto he attributed it to Joseph F. Smith, perhaps to make it more credible.\(^{23}\)

Lorin C. Woolley did not "help to make" the Manifesto. He first felt indifferent about it and later despised it. He dedicated his life to fighting its effects. He misunderstood the process of its composition and the attitudes of those who approved and enforced it. Surely there were few people in the LDS Church who understood the Manifesto less than Loin Woolley did. He fabricated his role in the Manifesto's creation so that he could preach against it as one "in the know."

**B. People-Reading and the Power of Kinship Relations**

Lorin Woolley often enthralled his hearers with anecdotes about their own relatives. By recounting these tales, Lorin met the emotional needs of those who listened to him. Wielding the power of family bonds, he forged emotional links between his hearers and himself, enabled others to bask in the reflected glory of their ancestors, and rekindled hope in the hearts of those who had lost a loved one.

Some of Lorin's most intimate confidants described him as a man who could read the emotional needs of others, and then meet those needs with his words. According to his son-in-law, Ferrell Coombs, who cared for him during his final illness, "Lorin was one who thought way ahead of you. He seemed to read that which you needed, and he seemed to have a gift of giving you just what you wanted." Lorin's friend and follower, Rhea Kunz, said of him, "If I ever knew a man who could read people, it was Lorin Woolley."\(^{24}\)

Lorin Woolley matched his stories to the emotional needs of his hearers. He apparently sensed the emotional needs of others and then met those needs - sometimes by sharing a relevant

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autobiographical incident, sometimes by concocting a yarn which would satisfy them.

1. Forging Emotional Links

Lorin used the power of family bonds to link others to himself and to his work. He made people feel intimately connected to him by telling them that they were related to him, physically or spiritually. He made people feel like they were connected to, or even a part of, his work of promoting plural marriage by telling them their family was involved in it.

a. "You and I are related."

Lorin Woolley convinced several of his fundamentalist followers that they were related to him. While discussing Lyman Jessop's ancestry with him in 1925, Lorin told Lyman, "You and I are related." Around the same time, Lorin informed Lyman's cousin, Moroni Jessop, that he (Lorin) and Moroni shared the "same mother [in heaven]." Lorin told his right-hand man, J. Leslie Broadbent, that he would be Lorin's son in the spirit world. Lorin succeeded in making some of his followers feel related to him. Leslie's wife was sufficiently impressed that she remembered Lorin's remark several decades later. That the Jessops felt related to Lorin is clear: they affectionately called Lorin's father, John Woolley, "Grandpa John," and Lorin Woolley, "Uncle Lorin."²⁵

b. The Ordination of Samuel Kunz

In the fall of 1931, Lorin told Morris Kunz and his wife, Rhea, that he had ordained a Samuel Kunz of Driggs, Idaho to the office of "patriarch and set him apart to perform plural marriages in that stake until his death." Morris was deeply impressed by this, since Samuel Kunz was his uncle. Lorin explained further that he ordained Kunz because Joseph F. Smith instructed him to and because Kunz had qualified by marrying three wives. Lorin implied that Patriarch Kunz had performed plural marriages in his stake until his death in 1927.²⁶

Lorin amazed Morris and Rhea with this story. When Lorin told Morris he had ordained

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Samuel Kunz, Morris marveled, "That's my uncle!" Morris also eagerly informed Lorin that Samuel Kunz had blessed him years earlier. Because Morris responded with such great interest, Lorin told him the details of the story. Morris still remembered these details some fifty-five years later when he wrote his life's story. Rhea, who had divorced Morris forty years earlier, related the same story, with the same details. The Kunz's were obviously deeply impressed by Lorin's story. By telling this story Lorin linked Morris Kunz more securely to himself and to his work of perpetuating polygamy. Because he believed in Lorin's story, Morris thought that his patriarchal blessing was given to him under Lorin's authority and he regarded Lorin as a friend of the family. Lorin made Morris feel that he was already involved in his work, because the Kunz family was involved in it. Morris became so enamored with the idea that he was connected to Lorin Woolley and his work that he ignored substantial evidence against Lorin's story.27

Lorin Woolley evidently fabricated his tale about ordaining Samuel Kunz. Although Samuel Kunz served as Teton Stake patriarch for eleven years, he never did "qualify" to be a patriarch, by Lorin Woolley's standards; nor did he fulfill the calling Lorin allegedly gave him. Samuel was a polygamist, but he married only two wives, not the three wives Lorin would have required of a prospective patriarch. If Kunz received authority from Lorin to perform plural marriages, he failed to use that authority in any meaningful way. Although the Church excommunicated all who performed or entered into plural marriages during Kunz's tenure as patriarch, neither Kunz nor anyone else in his stake was so disciplined. Either Samuel and those he performed marriages for were able to hide their actions and extra wives in the tiny Idaho towns of Driggs, Bates, and Cedron; or Samuel Kunz did not "perform [any] plural marriages in that stake," and thus failed to live up to the commission Lorin Woolley allegedly delivered to him when he ordained him a patriarch. But Lorin Woolley never ordained him a patriarch.28

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Samuel Kunz was ordained a patriarch in Driggs, Idaho, not by Lorin Woolley, but by his nemesis - James E. Talmage, of the quorum of the Twelve Apostles. Lorin Woolley and his father, John, both perceived Apostle Talmage as a rank apostate. It was Apostle Talmage who, in 1924, advised the Davis Stake high council to excommunicate Lorin Woolley. But it was also Talmage who, eight years earlier, traveled to the Teton Stake conference and ordained Samuel Kunz a patriarch. Teton Stake records confirm this fact. And on Saturday, August 19, 1916, Talmage recorded in his diary, "Arrived at Driggs, Idaho, about 1 p.m. . . . This afternoon I ordained Samuel Kunz of Bates, Teton Stake, a Patriarch in the Church."29

Samuel Kunz was, as Lorin Woolley said, ordained under the direction of Joseph F. Smith, LDS Church president; but President Smith did not send Lorin Woolley to ordain him, he sent Apostle Talmage.30 If President Smith had sent Lorin, he would have been violating Church policy. According to LDS doctrine, only a member of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles may ordain a patriarch: Talmage was one of the Twelve Apostles; Lorin was not.

Strangely, Morris Kunz learned that Church records identified James E. Talmage as the one who ordained his uncle, but preferred to believe that Lorin Woolley had told him the truth and the Church had falsified its records! Kunz wrote,

Now they have it in the church record that James E. Talmage ordained him a patriarch. Well, that was done so they would have a church record, because they weren't accepting [Lorin Woolley's authority] at that time.31

Kunz evidently had not seen James E. Talmage's diary: the evidence in it cannot be explained away so easily. James E. Talmage would not have falsified his diary entry for August 19, 1916 to cover for Lorin Woolley, because he did not believe that Lorin held the apostolic authority he needed to

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ordain a patriarch, nor did believe that plural marriage should be perpetuated. If Talmage had believed Lorin was authorized to perpetuate plural marriage, he would not have participated in Lorin's 1924 excommunication. Lorin Woolley misled Morris Kunz regarding this ordination.32

Why did Morris Kunz choose to believe Lorin Woolley over the written record? Morris trusted Lorin implicitly. And perhaps, as suggested above, Morris was enthralled with the idea that he was linked, through the uncle who had given him his patriarchal blessing, to Lorin Woolley and his polygamous work. Perhaps Morris was also feeding Morris' self-image by making him feel proud of his uncle, that great man whom he asserted had been "called by revelation to be set apart to be a patriarch and perform marriages."

2. "Basking in Reflected Glory"

Morris believed the great thing Lorin told him about his uncle and undoubtedly felt proud of his heritage, and therefore proud of himself. Social psychologists call this tendency to feel good about ourselves when we are associated with someone good or great "basking in reflected glory." People "bask in reflected glory" when they feel elated that their favorite sports team has won, when they take pride in the history and great achievements of their country, and when they feel "family pride" after reading or hearing what great people their forebears were.33

Lorin Woolley seems to have understood that people will "bask in reflected glory" if given the opportunity, and he provided them with abundant opportunities. Lorin told people great things about their relatives and thereby enabled them to bask in the glory those relatives reflected. As Lorin had enabled Morris Kunz to bask in his uncle's alleged glory, so he enabled other fundamentalists to bask in the real or imagined glory of their relatives.

a. The Line of the Royal Priesthood

Lorin often told his friends that they were descended from significant people. Lorin told
Lyman Jessop that both he and Lyman had come through "the line of the royal Priesthood." He told another of his followers, Ianthus Barlow, that he (Ianthus) was descended from one of the original twelve apostles of Jesus Christ.  

Lorin announced to Rhea Allred Kunz that her father, B. Harvey Allred, was a prophet. In the mid-1930's, Harvey wrote one of the first fundamentalist books, *A Leaf in Review*. Regarding that book, Lorin said to her, "Sister Rhea, do you know that every word in your father's book is scripture?" Rhea enthusiastically quoted Lorin on this a myriad of times over the next several decades. Near the end of her life, she repeated this quote to the present author several times and gave him a copy of her father's book. Rhea always basked in the glory of her scripture-writing father and the glory of her prophetic friend, Lorin Woolley.

3. Hope to the Hopeless: The Resurrection Stories

Lorin comforted the bereaved by assuring them that God would soon raise their departed loved ones from the grave, or convincing them that He had already done so. He testified publicly that he had been visited by several resurrected beings and privately assured friends that he had seen and shaken hands with their deceased relatives.

Lorin revealed to Ianthus Barlow that he knew Ianthus' late wife Chloe was resurrected because he had "met her and shook her hand" after she died. Similarly, when Lorin's widowed friend Rose Kelsch worried that a tree on her husband's grave would disturb his body, Lorin cheered her, "Don't worry; [that tree] can't bother him. I've seen him several times since [his death]. He's not down there anymore."

When Rose died, Lorin spoke at her funeral and consoled the Kelsch family. He affirmed that there was

no reason why this good woman should lay in her grave very long. . . . her good

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husband has been resurrected before now . . . I have no doubt but that his body has been called up by him. Therefore, why should she lay long? She lived a pure life and as she laid it down pure why should she lay there long to be purified? I know that the resurrection is going on.37

In at least two other funerals sermons, Lorin testified that he had "seen" and "shaken hands with" resurrected beings. He dried the tears of the bereaved by assuring them that their loved ones had conquered death or soon would. Lorin's most significant tale began as a simple resurrection story, but evolved over the course of half a century into the origin myth of Mormon fundamentalism.

C. Stretching and Expanding the Truth

Lorin Woolley sometimes claimed a little more than was true. Often he grounded what he said in historical fact but went a little beyond the facts to make his story more impressive or more effective in conveying his point. He stretched the truth with regard to his ordination to the office of elder and his father's "plural marriage" to Annie Fisher.

1. Lorin Woolley's Ordination

Lorin was ordained an elder by John Lyon at the age of sixteen on March 10, 1873. A "line of authority" recorded by Lorin states that Lorin received the office of elder from John Lyon, who received it from Brigham Young. But in 1922 Lorin claimed to have been ordained an elder by Brigham Young at the age of thirteen. And in 1929 he claimed he had been ordained an apostle by Brigham Young at the age of thirteen on March 20, 1870.38

Lorin stretched the truth about this ordination. He backdated his ordination by three years,
making it more impressive. He also skipped a step in his line of authority, claiming his authority directly from Brigham Young without John Lyon's mediation. Finally, he upgraded his ordination from an ordination to *eldership* to an ordination to *apostleship*.

2. **John Woolley's "Plural Marriage" to Annie Fisher**

Six days after John W. Woolley died, his son Lorin told one of his followers that "Joseph F. Smith (Prest.) to his [most recent] wife in plural marriage, since the manifesto." The hearer of this claim concluded that the LDS General Authorities were full of "hypocrisy" because they perform such marriages and then "say it can't be done." 39

John W. Woolley married three times. He married Julia Ensign in 1851, Ann Everington Roberts in 1886, and Annie Fisher in 1910. (This latter marriage was performed by President Joseph F. Smith.) Julia died in 1891, leaving John with one wife. Ann died in January of 1910, leaving John single. Two months later John married Annie Fisher. She was his only living wife from then until his death. So how could Lorin claim that Joseph F. Smith married John to Annie "in plural marriage, since the manifesto"? 40

In Latter-day Saint doctrine, temple marriages like John's continue after death. So, in a technical theological sense, John's last marriage was a post-Manifesto plural marriage. But the Manifesto was never intended to stop marriages in which a man has wives in the spirit world. It was only intended to stop the *earthly* practice of plural marriage, in which a man has more than one *living* wife. When Lorin called John's last marriage a post-Manifesto plural marriage he was, in a sense, "telling the truth;" but he was not telling the whole truth. He was misleading his hearer, making his story more impressive and more powerful in conveying his point - that post-Manifesto plural marriages were okay.

3. **Combining Stories**

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Lorin Woolley sometimes combined separate historical events or separate stories into a single narrative. An excellent example of this is Lorin's combination of John Taylor's prediction of Lorin's greatness and Joseph F. Smith's return to Utah in 1887. In 1891 (and for decades thereafter), Lorin claimed that after he performed a hazardous mail-carrying mission for John Taylor, Taylor promised him that he would become "great and good" in the church and kingdom of God.\(^{41}\) Years later Lorin told another, unrelated story to the effect that on his death-bed John Taylor sent him to find Joseph F. Smith and convey him to his bedside.\(^{42}\) The latter story is demonstrably false. Lorin was not sent to convey Joseph F. Smith to Utah, Albert W. Davis was - according to the diary of John Taylor's bodyguard (Samuel Bateman), the reminiscent account of one of the participants in the event (Albert W. Davis, Jr.), and Andrew Jenson's *Church Chronology*. Further evidence that Lorin did not participate in this event comes from his incorrect identification of the man who traveled with Joseph F. Smith on this occasion. Lorin said it was the Woolleys's seventeen year old farm hand, George Earl; actually, it was the fifty-two year old president of the Summit Stake, W. W. Cluff. (Obviously, Lorin again inserted himself into a historical event he played no part in).\(^{43}\)

Eventually, Lorin combined the story of John Taylor predicting his greatness with the story that John Taylor had sent him to fetch Joseph F. Smith: he claimed that John Taylor predicted his greatness *when* he sent him to bring Smith. Since John Taylor never sent Lorin on this mission, we can be sure that Taylor did not predict Lorin's greatness when he sent him on *this* mission! The best explanation for Lorin's claim that John Taylor predicted his greatness when he sent him to fetch Joseph F. Smith is that Lorin combined two unrelated stories.

**III. The Development of the Lorin Woolley Story**

Over the course of forty years Lorin created a powerful religious myth out of a

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handful of adventure tales. When Lorin began telling others that Joseph Smith appeared to John Taylor and that John Taylor and Joseph Smith gave him (Lorin) a mission, his stories were simple and largely self-centered. By 1929, the Story had taken on mythological dimensions and become the central justification for an entire religious movement. How did Lorin transmute his leaden adventure tales into mythological gold?

Now that we understand how this raconteur transformed history in his day-to-day storytelling, we can see how he may have modified it in creating his masterwork. We have seen that Lorin Woolley transformed historical truth in several ways: by inserting himself into a narrative, by inserting his hearers' relatives into a story, by stretching and expanding historical events, and by synthesizing discrete events into a single narrative. By examining the various extant accounts of the Story in chronological order and in the light of Lorin's tendencies to alter the truth, we can give a compelling account of the Story's evolution. The following account is necessarily speculative, but it rests on Lorin's demonstrated patterns of truth-distortion and is, perhaps, the best explanation of the Lorin Woolley Story's development that can be given at present.

Before the Story: The Established Historical Facts

To be properly understood, Lorin's Story must be seen against the backdrop of the historical facts on which it is based. Lorin made the following historical events part of his Story: John Taylor's vision of Joseph Smith, Jr., John Taylor's stay in the John W. Woolley home, John Taylor's reception of a revelation on marriage, Lorin Woolley's carrying of mail for John Taylor, and Lorin Woolley's seemingly miraculous recovery from malaria in 1889.

1. John Taylor's Vision of Joseph Smith

In July of 1885 Joseph Smith III began proselyting in Utah - for five months he
roamed the territory, thundering against plural marriage. He could not have timed his personal crusade better - his spiritual and intellectual attacks bolstered an on going judicial Crusade against Mormon polygamy. U.S. marshals had jailed scores of polygamists and driven hundreds more, including John Taylor, into hiding. If Joseph had found the exiled prophet's hideout and eavesdropped on him, he would have heard shocking news about his late father, Joseph Smith, Jr. - he would have heard John Taylor testify, "I have seen the Prophet Joseph [recently]."\(^{44}\)

John Taylor claimed that Joseph Smith, Jr. appeared to him, confided in him his sorrow that his namesake was fighting the LDS Church, and revealed to him that the Lord would end the federal crusade against Mormonism "in [His] own due time." One of the homes John Taylor stayed in during Joseph Smith III's Utah mission is the John Carlisle home in Murray. Two acquaintances of John Taylor (a Carlisle family member who lived at the home at the time and the son of one of Taylor's bodyguards) claimed that such a visitation occurred in the John Carlisle home.\(^{45}\)

2. **John Taylor's Stay in the Woolley Home and the 1886 Revelation**

Several months after he left the Carlisle home, John Taylor moved into the home of Lorin Woolley's father, John W. Woolley. While there John Taylor received and recorded a revelation on "the new and everlasting covenant of marriage." The revelation said that this covenant of marriage could not be abrogated and that those who hoped for full salvation or exaltation must "do the works of Abraham" - a phrase many Nineteenth Century Mormons associated with polygamy.\(^{46}\)

3. **Lorin Woolley's Service as Mail-carrier for John Taylor**

Lorin Woolley lived nearby, so John Taylor sometimes enlisted him to help in the work of the "underground." Lorin frequently smuggled mail from President Taylor's underground hideout to the church's headquarters, the Gardo House. Lorin continued to carry mail for John

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Taylor, even after he (Taylor) moved to another hiding place.\textsuperscript{47}

4. A Seemingly Miraculous Recovery

Shortly after John Taylor's death in 1887, Lorin was called on a mission to the Indian Territory. While there he fell prey to the "annual epidemic" that tormented the Indian Territory missionaries: malaria. Malaria nearly killed Lorin, but once he began to recover he mended rapidly. His recovery was so quick and so dramatic that one of his fellow missionaries attributed it to divine intervention and recorded in the mission records that Elder Woolley had "overcome [his] sickness by faith."\textsuperscript{48}

Stage I

1. A Prediction of Greatness, a Miraculous Healing, and a Vision

In September of 1891 Lorin told his uncle, George E. Woolley, of a prediction made by John Taylor and of his (Lorin's) mission sickness and miraculous recovery. Lorin claimed that John Taylor sent him on a particularly hazardous mail-carrying mission and that he performed the mission well. Upon his return, he claimed, John Taylor thanked him and predicted that he would be "a great and good man in Israel."\textsuperscript{49}

A couple years later the validity of this prediction was tested. According to Lorin's own account, he lay dying of malaria in Indian Territory when he saw in vision Joseph Smith and John Taylor (and Brigham Young, according to some accounts) debating whether he should live or die. Joseph Smith argued that Lorin should die, while John Taylor (and perhaps Brigham Young) argued that Lorin must live to fill his (John Taylor's) prediction that he would become a great man. John Taylor apparently won the argument and Lorin began to mend immediately. (According to
some accounts, John Taylor laid his hands on Lorin's head and blessed him, then Lorin was healed.\textsuperscript{50}

2. A \textbf{Joseph Smith Visitation in the Woolley Home}? 

In the 1890's, Lorin Woolley repeatedly testified that Joseph Smith had visited John Taylor during his stay at the John Woolley home. Lorin varied his story from one telling to another: sometimes he alleged he had seen Joseph himself; at other times he claimed only to have heard John Taylor testify of seeing him. According to Lorin, Taylor glowed as he came from his room the morning after the visitation. Taylor announced that he had visited with the deceased prophet "for a long time," and he continued to glow for several hours.\textsuperscript{51}

Lorin began telling this story to family members within five years of the alleged event, so the story may be accurate. Or perhaps Lorin simply borrowed the story of Joseph Smith's visitation at the Carlisle home and inserted himself and his father into the story. In the earliest documented tellings of the story Lorin was relating it to members of the Woolley family. Therefore if Lorin moved the event from the Carlisle home to the Woolley home he would have been modifying the historical truth according to a familiar pattern - he would have been inserting his hearers' family into the story.

Lorin related the story of this Joseph Smith visitation dozens of times between 1891 and 1934, but Lorin varied one of these accounts from all the others. While serving his mission in Indian Territory, Lorin testified to his mission president and uncle, Andrew Kimball, "that he knew the prophets Joseph [Smith], Brigham [Young], and Heber [C. Kimball] lived for he had seen them as they appeared to Pres. John Taylor in Bro. John Woolley's house." What is unique in this account is Lorin's assertion that Brigham Young and his counselour Heber C. Kimball accompanied Joseph Smith on his visit to John Taylor. He failed to mention their appearance in any other

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account, previous or subsequent.\footnote{52}

This anomalous account is easily explicable in light of Lorin's tendency to insert his hearers' relatives into his stories. Heber C. Kimball was Brigham Young's First Counselour and was also the father of Lorin's mission president, Andrew Kimball. Lorin may have added a vision of Heber C. Kimball to the story on this occasion to comfort or impress Andrew Kimball. If so, then adding Brigham Young would have been a natural corollary, since Brigham was Heber Kimball's intimate friend and immediate superior.

However, Lorin's inclusion of Brigham in this story may simply demonstrate his tendency to combine separate events into a single tale. He may have created the tale of miraculous events in the Woolley home by combining three stories: that of Joseph Smith's visitation to John Taylor; that of his own vision of Smith, Taylor, and Young; and that of John Taylor's stay in the Woolley home. If Lorin synthesized these stories, then he could claim, with only slight dishonesty, that he had seen Joseph Smith and Brigham Young when they appeared to John Taylor in the Woolley home. After all, he had seen Joseph Smith and Brigham Young talk with John Taylor (in vision), Joseph Smith had visited John Taylor while the latter was in hiding (according to Taylor's own widely circulated remarks), and John Taylor had stayed in the Woolley home.

Since Lorin never related the Young and Kimball visitations in any of the other extant accounts of the Lorin Woolley Story, it seems plausible and even probable that he related them to Andrew Kimball because he was modifying the truth in two familiar ways: by inserting a hearer's relative into the narrative and by combining separate events into a single story.

Stage II

John W. Woolley strolled along the streets of Salt Lake City in the shadow of the

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magnificent granite temple he had worked in for nearly twenty years - since 1893. Matthias F. Cowley, formerly of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles, approached him. The two exchanged greetings and then Cowley whispered, "Are you familiar with the [marriage] sealing ceremony?" John replied that he was. "Good," responded Cowley, "If any good men come to you, don't turn them away." Soon men began to trickle into John's house wanting him to perform plural marriages for them in violation of the Church's 1890 Manifesto against plural marriage - they said Matthias Cowley had sent them.53

Shortly after John began performing plural marriages, Lorin offered a more elaborate account of the Lorin Woolley Story. He related the Joseph Smith visitation but then went on to tell of a meeting that occurred the next day. According to Lorin's handwritten 1912 statement, a number of men had been pressuring John Taylor to issue a manifesto against plural marriage similar to the one adopted by the Church in 1890; but Taylor announced in the meeting that he would rather have his right arm severed than sign such a pernicious document. Other details were added to the story at this point, including the approximate time it occurred: "the latter part of September, 1886."54

John Woolley also became a part of the story at this point. Lorin added him to the story as one who witnessed John Taylor's radiance and heard him testify of having seen Joseph Smith the previous night.55

The source of this new story about John Taylor rejecting a manifesto is unclear. No contemporary documentation for this meeting has been uncovered. Perhaps Lorin manufactured the story, but this cannot be documented either. Wherever Lorin obtained the story, it seems likely that he told it to justify his father in performing post-Manifesto plural marriages.

It is significant that Lorin linked the story of John Taylor rejecting a manifesto with his story of Joseph Smith appearing to John Taylor: these stories would remain indissolubly linked ever after.

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From this point on Lorin told the story of Joseph Smith's visitation to John Taylor in order to justify his father's work of perpetuating plural marriage. The developing Lorin Woolley Story was not just about Lorin Woolley anymore: it was about the preservation of a divine principle, "the Principle" of plural marriage.

Stage III

In March of 1914, John W. Woolley was excommunicated for violating the 1890 Manifesto. The shocked old patriarch immediately stopped performing plural marriages. For the next five years he mourned over his outcast status and even begged relatives to get him restored to fellowship. But sometime between the summer of 1918 and autumn 1919, John had a change of heart: he began performing plural marriages again. John claimed that "within two months" prior to his death in November 1918 President Joseph F. Smith authorized him to "go ahead in his mission of sealing plural marriages" and told him he was impervious to church discipline.56

Within two years word reached the Church's new president, Heber J. Grant, that John Woolley was performing marriages. Grant announced in the April 1921 General Conference that no one holding the office of patriarch was authorized to perform plural marriages. Grant was directly challenging John Woolley's claim to authority: the highest priesthood office Woolley had held was that of patriarch.57

But the Woolleys almost immediately answered with a challenge of their own. Within six weeks of Heber J. Grant's Conference address, an expanded version of the Lorin Woolley Story was being circulating as far away as Alberta, Canada. The expanded story included the Joseph Smith visitation to the Woolley home and John Taylor's rejection of a Manifesto, but it added the reception of the 1886 revelation and the granting of a commission - and authority.

In May, John Woolley's younger brother, George, heard that at the same time Joseph Smith

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had appeared to John Taylor, "Taylor had placed three persons under covenant to see to it that Polygamy was maintained & that he ordained Loren Woolley an apostle." The three persons Taylor allegedly put under covenant were apparently John W. Woolley, Lorin C. Woolley, and Samuel Bateman. Each of them, according to Lorin, was also ordained an apostle. Lorin also alleged at this time that Jesus Christ visited John Taylor in the Woolley home on the same evening that Joseph Smith appeared to him. And he also added that Jesus gave the 1886 Revelation to John Taylor that evening. Although Lorin had written in 1912 that he did not know the exact dates of the Joseph Smith visitation or John Taylor's rejection of a manifesto, he now pinpointed them, September 26th and 27th, 1886. But how did Lorin remember details in the 1920's that he had not known in 1912?58

Lorin apparently combined his 1912 story with other events he had experienced and heard of. None of the earlier accounts of the Lorin Woolley Story refer to the 1886 Revelation, Christ's appearance to John Taylor, or the exact dates of September 26th and 27th, 1886. It seems that Lorin became aware of the 1886 Revelation, realized from its date that it was received in the Woolley home, and added it into his story. Perhaps adding a visitation of Christ followed naturally once he added the 1886 Revelation: if John Taylor received a revelation, that implies contact with the Revelator. Perhaps Lorin believed Christ visited John Taylor at the time he received the 1886 Revelation, so he stretched the truth and testified that he knew this was the case. Lorin undoubtedly obtained a date for the visitation from the 1886 Revelation - it bears the date September 27, 1886. So it appears that Lorin added detail to his story by blending yet another historical event into the mix, the reception of the 1886 Revelation.59

Why did Lorin begin claiming that he, his father, and Samuel Bateman had been ordained apostles by John Taylor and commissioned to perpetuate polygamy? We have seen above that Lorin received the Melchizedek Priesthood from John Lyon at the age of 16, but later claimed to

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have received it from Brigham Young at the age of 13. So, we know that Lorin was not above changing his authority claims to make them more impressive.

Lorin may have similarly stretched the truth in claiming the apostleship: Lorin was a seventy, and many Nineteenth Century Mormons considered the seventies to be apostles. Sometimes they even referred to them as the "seventy apostles." Lorin himself stated that the only distinction between an apostle and a seventy was that the former had seen the Savior while the latter had not. Lorin believed that a seventy held the same authority as an apostle, but had not had the same experiences; therefore, he would have believed that he held the authority of an apostle. Lorin may have stretched the truth about this matter to convince others that he held this authority: a direct ordination to the apostleship by John Taylor would have carried more weight than an ordination to the office of seventy by some lesser man. In other words, Lorin believed he held apostolic authority and the best way to convince others of this was not to argue that seventies were apostles, but to lie about the source of his authority.60

But Lorin claimed more than the apostleship; he also claimed a special commission from John Taylor to perpetuate plural marriage. What was the source of this claim? We may speculate that Lorin added the story of his near-death vision and the tale of John Taylor predicting his greatness to the growing Lorin Woolley Story. Lorin understood John Taylor's prediction of his greatness as a promise that he would live to perform a significant life's work and he may also have understood it as a commission.61 By 1929, and perhaps much earlier, Lorin had come to understand his life's work to be the perpetuation of plural marriage. Lorin told his intimates that the prediction that he would do something great "was fulfilled, at least in part" by his mission "to assist in perpetuating the practice of plural marriage."62

It appears that Lorin may indeed have worked elements of the prediction of greatness story.
and his near-death vision into the Lorin Woolley Story. The 1929 story adds the detail that Lorin served a hazardous mission for John Taylor just before Taylor gave him a commission to perpetuate plural marriage. This may be a stretching and expansion of the story that Lorin filled a hazardous mail-carrying mission for Taylor and was then rewarded with a promise of greatness (which promise he understood to give him an important life's mission).  

Furthermore, Lorin added details to the 1920's versions of the Lorin Woolley Story that mirror his near-death vision. For instance, Lorin reported on May 14, 1922 that at the September 27, 1886 meeting

Pres. Taylor placed his hand on [Lorin Woolley's] head and ordained him
an apostle and gave him a certain mission to perform with relation to
Celestial Marriage, the words being dictated by the Prophet Joseph Smith,
who stood by Pres. Taylor's side.

And in his 1929 story Lorin reported that John Taylor set him apart to perform plural marriages while "the Prophet Joseph Smith stood by directing the proceedings. Similarly, in Lorin's near-death vision John Taylor laid his hands on Lorin's head and blessed him while Joseph Smith presided over the event. Lorin may have stretched his 1889 blessing from the John Taylor of vision into an 1886 setting apart by the John Taylor of flesh and combined this "stretched" story with the 1912 Lorin Woolley Story. The least that can be said is that the 1920's Lorin Woolley Story and the near-death vision share significant common features and Lorin was not above stretching and combining stories.  

Perhaps we can similarly make sense of Samuel Bateman's appearance in the story. So far as extant records show, Lorin first told of Samuel Bateman's ordination to the apostleship and

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commission to carry plural marriage in the very early 1920's. Around 1922, Daniel Bateman, Samuel's son, began corroborating Lorin's story. Daniel Bateman testified that John Taylor said he had talked to Joseph Smith and Jesus, floated over the floor, rejected a proposed Manifesto, and recorded the 1886 Revelation. Daniel admitted that he did not observe his father's ordination and commission and that his father had never told him of the event; but he said that he had heard the Woolleys testify of his father's ordination and he believed them. Interestingly, however, Daniel Bateman is not known to have testified to the truthfulness of the Lorin Woolley Story until Lorin began claiming in the early 1930's that Samuel Bateman had been ordained an apostle and commissioned to perpetuate plural marriage. Samuel Bateman is conspicuously absent from the 1912 story, although the latter names several persons who were present on the occasion.65

How did Samuel Bateman become part of the Lorin Woolley Story? How did Daniel Bateman become Lorin's chief witness to the Story's accuracy? Were these events related? Perhaps an adequate answer to the latter question will answer the former two. Possibly Lorin drew Daniel Bateman in as a corroborator in precisely the same way he drew Morris Kunz in - by including his relative in his stories. Lorin may have inserted Samuel Bateman into his story while relating it to Daniel Bateman around 1921. The addition of his father to the story would likely have made Daniel Bateman feel that he was already a part of Lorin's work and perhaps would have made him feel obligated to corroborate the story - for his father's sake. After all, it was his father's work, too (according to Lorin). Such a move on Lorin's part would fit with other instances in which he added his listener's family to his story and would explain at least partially why Samuel Bateman suddenly appeared in the story and why Daniel Bateman almost simultaneously began corroborating the story.

In addition to the reading in his near-death vision, Lorin may have synthesized other ideas

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and tales with the Lorin Woolley Story during the 1920's, including the predictions of John T. Clark, the prophecies of John W. Taylor, and the story of Joseph Smith's last charge to the Twelve Apostles. John Taylor's alleged prophecies regarding the apostasy of the seventh President of the Church, the bondage of the Saints, and the coming of the "one mighty and strong" closely parallel things John T. Clark had been prophesying since 1904. Significantly, the first person Lorin is on record telling these prophecies to is John T. Clark. Lorin admitted that he had "forgotten" these prophecies but later remembered them through the aid of God's Spirit. When Lorin "forgot" and "remembered" these prophecies, he may have been confabulating - unconsciously creating memories of events which never occurred. (Lorin "remembered" these prophecies thirty-five years after their alleged occurrence. He was sixty-five at the time.)

John Taylor's alleged prophecy that three-quarters of the Latter-day Saints would apostatize is identical to a prophecy by his son, John W. Taylor. The man remembered John W. Taylor uttering this prophecy around the turn of the century, but it was not attributed to the prophet John Taylor until the 1920's (as far as extant records show). Perhaps John W. Taylor simply repeated his father's prophecies, or perhaps Lorin added the story of John W. Taylor's prophecy to the rapidly swelling Lorin Woolley Story.

Another element of the story Lorin may have borrowed from another source is the levitation of John Taylor. Lorin may have added this to his story when he misread a passage in a letter by Benjamin F. Johnson. Johnson was a personal friend of the prophet Joseph Smith who recorded his experiences with Prophet in a letter he wrote near the turn of the century. The letter was circulated among Mormon fundamentalists in the nineteen-teens and nineteen-twenties. The letter reports, among other things, that when Joseph Smith gave the keys of the kingdom to the Twelve Apostles he "raised himself from the floor." When this account is paralleled with another account Johnson
gave of the same event, it becomes clear that Johnson was simply saying that Joseph Smith stood up from the floor. But when the letter account is read without this comparative perspective, the reader may reasonably conclude that Joseph Smith levitated over the floor. If Lorin had read or heard this account, he may have incorporated this element of the Benjamin F. Johnson letter (as he understood it) into his developing myth. This is all speculation, of course. But such speculation is warranted - at least as speculation - by Lorin's tendencies to combine stories and stretch the truth.68

IV. Conclusion

The above account of the evolution of the Lorin Woolley Story, speculative though it may be, has several things to commend it to the scholarly reader. The account explains the chronological development of the Story's recorded tellings. It rests primarily on Lorin Woolley's demonstrable tendencies to modify the historical truth. It explains why some of aspects of Lorin's story find support in contemporary documentation while others do not. The account possesses the quality of parsimony - it offers a relatively simple answer to a number of perplexing questions.

The above account also matches roughly the perceptions of one who was in a position to observe the unfolding of the Lorin Woolley Story from its earliest tellings to its final form, John W. Woolley's brother - George E. Woolley. George's diary and recollections provide us with information about the earliest known telling of the Lorin Woolley Story, Lorin's 1891 rehearsal of the Joseph Smith visitation to John Taylor. Thus George heard of the event directly from Lorin within five years of its alleged occurrence. George also provided information about the earliest known tellings of Lorin's near-death vision story and the story of John Taylor's prediction that Lorin would be great. George not only heard the earliest versions of these stories, he also heard the 1912 account of the Lorin Woolley Story and the 1920's account.

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After observing the unfolding of the story over the course of three decades George identified in writing three stages of the Story's development. The first stage he identified as the account of Joseph Smith's visitation to John Taylor in the Woolley home. In the second stage, according to George, Lorin was "more explicit as to what Pres. Taylor said" and included an account of John Taylor rejecting a manifesto. In the third stage, on George's interpretation, Lorin changed his 1889 near-death vision into an ordination to the apostleship and added that men were placed under covenant to perpetuate plural marriage. George Woolley demonstrated in his writings that he had strong critical faculties and a remarkable memory. His interpretations should not be swallowed down like a pill, but they should be taken seriously. It is a credit to the above account of the Lorin Woolley Story's evolution that it accords so well with the interpretations of one of the developing Lorin Woolley Story's most intimate observers although it is based on a broader spectrum of evidence.  

Over the course of forty-three years, Lorin Woolley reinterpretted many of his life's experiences. They became less exclusively personal to him and more universally significant. As Lorin reinterpretted his life's experiences and altered the account of it he dispended to others, he focused less on the personal meaning of the events (e.g. "this event saved my life," "this experience shows that I'm important") and more on the significance of his life in the larger divine plan. As Lorin transformed his experiences into myth, he shifted their focus from a person - himself - to a principle - plural marriage. In the 1929 Lorin Woolley Story, Lorin testified that what was ultimately important in his life was only his mission to perpetuate plural marriage. Through the alchemy of his story-telling and truth-stretching, Lorin transmuted the seed of his own personal experience into what is, for Mormon fundamentalists, spiritual gold.


7 *Journal History of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints.* Department of Special Collections and Archives, Harold B. Lee Library, Brigham Young University, Provo, Utah, entry dated Oct. 7, 1889, p. 2; "Early Church Information File TMs microfilm", Individual Record for Albert Carrington, Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints Family History Library, Salt Lake City, Utah; Stuy, 193 n.1.


10 Pratt and Smith, 785-786; Gibbons, 113, 120-125.


13 Joseph W. Musser Journals, 1920-1944" TMs [original], entry for 9 April 1922, Historical Department of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, Salt Lake City, Utah.

14 *ibid.*, *passim.

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66 Ibid., 14 May 1922; Musser, 149 n. 5.
67 B. Harvey Allred, A Leaf in History (Caldwell, Idaho: Caxton Printers, 1933), 186, 190.
69 George E. Woolley, letter, 20 May 1921; George E. Woolley, Journal in George Edwin Woolley, "Papers 1870-1922" TMC [typescript], Historical Department of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, Salt Lake City, Utah.