TROUBLE IN ZION:
THE RADICALIZATON OF MORMON THEOLOGY,
1831-1839

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Doctor of Philosophy

by
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TROUBLE IN ZION:
THE RADICALIZATION OF MORMON THEOLOGY,
1831-1839

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For Sky, Bruce, and my grandfathers, Clifford and Charles...

I miss you all.

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Introduction—Revealing Zion

In 1831, Joseph Smith received his first revelation regarding Missouri and establishing the place of Zion in Latter Day Saints' theology.¹ Missouri promised a land of freedom and potential for religious members who believed they were chosen by God. Independence in Jackson County, Missouri, also provided a place of refuge for the chosen Saints to escape from a sinful and corrupt world. This belief in Independence as the center of Mormonism's Zion proved integral to the problems the Saints faced in Missouri during the 1830s, as well as being influential to the development of Mormonism's creed and practices.² When the Church of Christ was first organized by Joseph Smith, Jr., in 1830, many adherents left Methodist, Baptist, Presbyterian, Christian, and other Protestant congregations to join the Mormon Church. Leaders and members of the new religious group worked tirelessly to spread the faith and to establish the foundations and beliefs of the new Church of Christ.³ Periods of persecution in upstate New York, Ohio, and Missouri forged an identity of persecuted believer for many Mormons that directly affected the way antebellum Saints viewed the world around

¹ Joseph Smith, Jr.'s, vision regarding Missouri as the location of Zion is dated April 1831 and was published in the Doctrine and Covenants and in the Book of Commandments.

² The significance and importance of the location of Zion in Independence, MO, is reflected in several revelations that were recorded in the Doctrine and Covenants and Book of Commandments following the expulsion of the Saints from Jackson County in late 1833. Grant Underwood's *The Millenarian World of Early Mormonism* also discusses the significance of Zion during the development of the Mormon faith. Grant Underwood, *The Millenarian World of Early Mormonism* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1993).

³ The early work of many Mormon leaders is well-documented. Some synthesis works include the following: Richard Bushman, *Joseph Smith: Rough Stone Rolling*, (New York: Knopf, 2005); Richard Abanes, *One Nation Under Gods: A History of the Mormon Church*, (New York: Basic Books, 2002); Matthew Bowman, *The Mormon People: The Making of An American Faith*, (New York: Random House, 2012); Jan Shipps, *Mormonism: The Story of a New Religious Tradition*, (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1987); Richard Bushman, *Joseph Smith and the Beginnings of Mormonism*, (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1987), as well as countless primary sources.

them.⁴ The intensity of the persecution in Missouri also drove the Church towards more radical revelations and religious practices following expulsion from the state in 1838 and 1839. As a result, by the time Joseph Smith suffered an assassin's bullet on June 27, 1844, the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints bore far fewer similarities to other Protestant denominations in the U.S. than it had at the church's inception 14 years earlier. Persecution, despite ideological commonalities between the Saints and their Protestant neighbors, spurred the radicalization of Mormon theology in the early 1840s.

In addition to their identities as the Mormon faithful, most Mormon converts believed themselves to be patriotic Americans who supported the beliefs of the Founding Fathers and passionately claimed God's support for the new nation.⁵ As citizens of a republican nation, Mormon believers lived according to what they understood were core American principles of liberty, personal responsibility, and duty to God and country.⁶

⁴ The aspect of persecution is discussed in Underwood's *The Millenarian World of Early Mormonism* as well as other works more focused on the Missouri period of Mormon history. These include the following: Kenneth Winn, *Exiles in a Land of Liberty: Mormons in America, 1830-1846*, (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1989), Marvin Hill, *Quest for Refuge: The Mormon Flight from American Pluralism*, (Salt Lake City: Signature Books, 1998); and Stephen C. LeSueur, *The 1838 Mormon War in Missouri*, (Columbia: University of Missouri Press, 1987).

⁵ The church Joseph Smith, Jr., founded underwent several name changes during the decade and a half before his death in 1844. During the 1830s, the term Mormon was commonly used by those outside the faith as a derogatory reference to members of the religious sect. During the Missouri period, the terms Church of Christ and the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints became official names of the Mormon Church. After Smith's death, the largest branch took the name Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints (the modern LDS Church), while smaller branches became known as the Reorganized Church of Latter Day Saints (today's Community of Christ Church), the Strangites, the Cutlerites, and others. These branches are today considered to be under the Mormon canopy.

⁶ Many religious historians discuss the connection between religion belief and republican principles during the Early Republic and antebellum period in America. They include the following: Nathan O. Hatch, *The Democratization of American Christianity*, (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1989), Mark A. Noll, *America's God: From Jonathan Edwards to Abraham Lincoln*, (New York: Oxford University Press, 2002), and E. Brooks Holifield, *Theology in America: Christian Thought from the Age of the Puritans to the Civil War*, (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2003). In addition, Kenneth Winn's *Exiles in the Land of Liberty* and Richard L. Bushman's *Joseph Smith and the Beginnings of Mormonism* speak directly on the connection of early Mormonism and republican ideals.

The clashes that broke out between Missourians and Mormons in Jackson, Clay, Carroll, Caldwell, and Daviess counties resulting from disagreements over religion, politics, and economic issues threatened to expose one or both sides as straying from republican American principles. While Missourians accused Mormons of being “deluded fanatics” who were ignorant of how to live as proper Americans, Mormons believed that Missourians corrupted republican principles by persecuting God’s faithful and failing to recognize some experiences, such as relocations, as valid religious events inspired by further revelations.⁷ As a result, Mormons and other religious groups disagreed on the role of Mormonism in American society, a conversation that has continued into the modern-day religious environment.

In the current American religious context, Mormonism is often viewed as a half-insider/half-outsider denomination that borders on acceptable to other Christian groups. Yet, Mormonism remains outside the larger Protestant mainstream. Mitt Romney’s unsuccessful bid for the Republican presidential candidacy in 2008 sparked religious inquiries into Latter Day Saints’ theology that demonstrated misunderstandings of some Mormon practices and beliefs by the general population. His campaign for the 2012 Republican nomination and Presidency led to more scrutiny of the faith by media and political actors. In addition, increased attention to the religious group indicated that many mainstream Protestants continue to view Mormonism as outside Protestant mainstream culture; in extreme cases as a religious cult, a realization that may have

⁷ According to Mechal Sobel’s *Teach Me Dreams*, religious participants are usually labeled as fanatics because of their involvement in experiential religion. This same argument is also discussed in J. Spencer Fluhman’s “*A Peculiar People*”. Mechal Sobel, *Teach Me Dreams: The Search for Self in the Revolutionary Era*, (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2000); J. Spencer Fluhman, “*A Peculiar People*”: *Anti-Mormonism and the Making of Religion in Nineteenth-Century America*, (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 2012).

astonished many of the Mormon faithful.⁸ This surprise also took place in antebellum America when Mormons were faced with repeated conflicts with other Americans who labeled the religious group as outsiders, while many of the Mormon faithful believed they best represented what Christianity and American republicanism should be about.⁹

Recent scholarship by Mormon scholars explicates the connection between early Saints and methods by which non-Mormons discredited the Mormon faith in order to marginalize the group. Spencer Fluhman provides insight into the significance of religion in the Missouri-Mormon conflicts by elucidating the way in which Missourians labeled and identified their Mormon neighbors. He argues that Joseph Smith's revelations and sermons "grew increasingly less conventional over time" until "it was clear to Mormons that Mormonism was something other than Protestant" by the mid-nineteenth century.¹⁰ Fluhman's study underscores the care with which non-Mormons discredited the Mormon faith by refusing to acknowledge it as a legitimate religion. Instead, Mormons were labeled as radicals and infidels rather than members of a new and growing sect. This dismissive language also explains how non-Mormon scholars contend that the Missouri-Mormon conflicts were not grounded in religion differences but in economic, political, and cultural causes. Labeling Mormons as a "fake religion" during the 1830s allowed for Missourians to justify their opposition without attacking an authentic Christian faith.¹¹

⁸ Jon Meacham, "The Mormon Identity: What Mitt Romney's Faith Tells Us About His Vision & Values," *Time Magazine* 180, No. 15 (October 8, 2012): 28-35. This article provides one example of Mormon identity as perceived by those outside the church in popular culture in American society.

⁹ Winn, *Exiles in a Land of Liberty*, p. 9.

¹⁰ Fluhman, "A Peculiar People", p. 4.

¹¹ Fluhman, "A Peculiar People", p. 9.

In *The Mormon People*, Matthew Bowman claims that the persecution and oppression of Saints during the nineteenth century helped forge an identity of the faith as “fully American.”¹² His study demonstrates that Mormons embraced American religious and political beliefs and attempted to work within the republican framework of the government for legitimacy during the early years of the Church. Although historian Kenneth Winn argues that Mormons suffered persecution in Missouri and Illinois strictly because Missourians and Illinoisans believed Mormons represented an anti-republican way of life, his argument fails to recognize the interconnectedness of religion with everyday life in antebellum America. Despite lower numbers of adherents to religious denominations than present-day America, many antebellum Americans intertwined religion and everyday experiences much more closely than is the case in today’s more secular world.¹³ Antebellum America was a place where Satan roamed the earth freely, constantly tempting humans to turn from Christ’s teachings and follow a path of sin.¹⁴ Dreams and visions brought information from God and the devil and revealed the nature of the world and God’s directions for living. Smith’s early visions in upstate New York revealing the location of the Golden Plates came in a context of a religious landscape that widely accepted the importance of these communications from God, even if few besides Mormons considered them as significant as scripture.¹⁵ If God could reveal the existence

¹² Bowman, *A Mormon People*, p. ix.

¹³ Although many historians have discussed religious adherence during the early 1850s, Jon Butler’s *Awash in a Sea of Faith* discusses this phenomenon in detail. Jonathan Butler, *Awash in a Sea of Faith: Christianizing the American People*, (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1990).

¹⁴ Hatch, *The Democratization of American Christianity*, pp. 34-40.

¹⁵ Ann Taves, *Fits, Trances, and Visions: Experiencing Religion and Explaining Experience from Wesley to James*, (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1999).

of a lost historical record through a vision and Satan visited humans, Smith's insistence that John, Peter, and James talked with him in the woods, as had the angel Moroni in Smith's first vision, could be plausibly believed, too. While a number of Smith's neighbors rejected the validity of the Prophet's visions, others not only accepted it but believed in its authenticity as a direct communication from God to his earthly children.

While many Americans believed the United States was the chosen nation of God, members of the Mormon faith took this belief literally by directly connecting their lineage to the ancient Jewish peoples and the Lost Tribes of Israel, as well as identifying as American. The Book of Mormon recounts the ministries and experiences of Lehi, his sons, and their descendants from their time in Palestine through the wars between the Nephites and Lamanites in what became America. In his account, Nephi consistently refers to keeping a record of his people's encounters instead of rehashing those of the Jewish tribes in the Holy Land. He explains his reasons for this in 1 Nephi 6:1-2 by writing, "I, Nephi, do not give the genealogy of my fathers in this part of my record; neither at any time shall I give it after upon these plates which I am writing; for it is given in the record which has been kept by my father...sufficeth it to say that we are descendants of Joseph."¹⁶ The common lineage with Jews as well as God's commandment for Lehi to leave ancient Palestine with his wife, sons, and son's wives and travel across the Atlantic combined to provide evidence that the Mormon faithful were indeed Saints chosen by God to perpetrate his designs for building up a land worthy of establishing the Millennial Kingdom in the last days. The sheer number of Saints who heard the revelations and moved to Missouri in preparation for Zion's establishment

¹⁶ *Book of Mormon*, 1 Nephi 6:1-2.

demonstrates both the willingness of Mormons to believe in Zion's significance and the special role of the Mormon faithful in its establishment.

The translated Book of Mormon also relied on the importance of dreams and visions to those who Saints believe are the spiritual ancestors of the antebellum Church. Nephi, fourth of the six sons of Lehi who migrated to the western hemisphere before the birth of Christ, recalled several visions that directed him to follow God's will. One, related in 1 Nephi 4, explains that Nephi received instructions from God to murder Laban who wanted Lehi's "land of inheritance." Another instructed Lehi to flee with his family from Jerusalem to the New World where the Lamanites rebelled against the Nephites.¹⁷ This migration to the western hemisphere eventually resulted in the engraving of the Golden Plates Joseph Smith, Jr., later translated into the Book of Mormon and the nineteenth century restoration of God's true plan for salvation. Dreams and visions are so important in the Book of Mormon that the recounted visions, interpretations of dreams, and direct revelations from God enjoy equal (and sometimes more) importance as the actual experiences of the Nephites and Lamanites. For Saints who lived in a world full of visions, trances, and dreams revealing God's will and Satan's temptations, supernatural accounts in the Book of Mormon appealed to the sensibilities of antebellum Americans.

Many religious persons in antebellum America viewed the United States as the new Zion where God had established a nation that feared the Lord and followed His religious commandments.¹⁸ Puritan rhetoric of America as a "City on a Hill" continued

¹⁷ *Book of Mormon*, 1 Nephi 13.

¹⁸ Stephen Stein, *The Encyclopedia of Apocalypticism: Volume 3: Apocalypticism in the Modern Period and the Contemporary Age*, (New York: Continuum, 2000).

to speak to religious practitioners who equated religious duty with democratic principles and a healthy dose of the Protestant work ethic in early factories and mills as well as farms built by hard work and dedication to tending the soil.¹⁹ A small Zionist movement to restore the Jews to their traditional homeland in Palestine worked itself into American religious conversations by the 1830s and 1840s, but most Americans viewed a nation ruled by Christian inspired democratic politicians as a more likely area from which the Millennium would spring and Christ would reign over an earthly kingdom.²⁰ Thus, Mormonism's placement of Zion in Jackson County, Missouri, appealed to those who believed the American nation held a special place in God's plan for the world. In addition, those who joined the Mormon faith could see themselves as directly contributing to the fulfillment of that plan.

Persecution in Missouri further convinced many Saints they were the elect to fulfill God's commandments. Mistreatment in upstate New York and Ohio prior to the 1838 crisis in Far West and northwest Missouri, as well as being driven from Jackson County in 1833, demonstrated that they alone understood God's call to create a society in which God could fulfill His promises. Prior to receiving the Golden Plates, Smith had been told in a vision that all other denominations were corrupt.²¹ As a result, Mormonism's importance grew to epic proportions in what many believed was the End Times. In Jackson County, the Mormon newspaper, *Evening and Morning Star*, recounted endless references to wars, famines, and other catastrophes which indicated the

¹⁹ Noll, *America's God*, pp. 188.

²⁰ Stephen O'Leary, *Arguing the Apocalypse: A Theory of Millennial Rhetoric*, (New York: Oxford University Press, 1994).

²¹ Bushman, *Joseph Smith and the Beginnings of Mormonism*, pp. 57-58.

final days of the earth loomed ever closer. This made Zion's establishment more necessary than ever. Mormon enthusiasm for Zion building necessitated bold action by the Saints to procure land for Zion's cities and conversion of Gentiles to the Mormon faith. Faced with avid Mormon practitioners, Missourians often reacted with anger and frustration towards members of the religious group. As Missourians reacted harshly to Mormon missionizing and land purchases, many Mormon faithful viewed Missourians' reactions as persecution. That persecution was yet another necessary precursor to Christ's return and the Millennial Kingdom's establishment.

Besides their presence in Jackson County, Mormons often piqued Missourian's tempers by proclaiming that God would deliver Zion into the Saints' hands by destroying the wicked and ripping land from the Missourians' ownership. In the December 1832 edition of the *Evening and Morning Star*, an article simply entitled "Zion" demonstrated Mormon belief in God's deliverance of Missouri lands into the Mormons' possession. The article stated, "The weak things of the world should come forth and break down the mighty and strong ones," indicating that a Mormon takeover of Jackson County was preordained.²² Occasionally, Missouri newspapers reported perceived Mormon threats toward Missouri landholders, but more often repeated stories about Zion's coming. Reports on other harbingers of the coming Millennial Kingdom demonstrated an insidious threat by Mormons to their Missouri neighbors.

After expulsion from Jackson County, continued refusal by the local, state, and national governments in 1834 to restore Mormons to their homes in Jackson County reeked of a sinful nation that refused to do God's will. The creation of Caldwell County

²² *Evening and Morning Star*, December 1832, Volume 1, Number 7, 6:2.

in 1836 provided the Saints with refuge from an increasingly corrupt world in both Clay and Jackson counties in Missouri and an angry Gentile population in Kirtland, Ohio. Caldwell was comprised of less acreage than all other counties surrounding it, but Missourians believed Caldwell could eliminate the tension of Missourians and Mormons coveting the same land. For Mormons, the smaller county demonstrated that they were being persecuted.²³ Even their county was limited by Gentile politicians despite Mormon attempts to embrace republican values. For a short while, Caldwell County did appear to ease tensions in Missouri and provided a new gathering point until the Jackson County Zion could be redeemed.

The Mormon Prophet himself fled an increasingly volatile situation in Ohio in early 1838 and joined the Missouri Mormon contingent with the intention of building a new Zion in Far West, Missouri, located in Caldwell County. Instead of postponing Zion until the Saints could retake Independence from the Gentiles, making Far West the center of the Missouri Mormon world would allow for a fulfillment of God's commandments as well as provide a safe haven for worship. Persecution in the early 1830s that necessitated removal to Far West from Jackson and then Clay counties worked toward the ultimate fulfillment of God's plan despite the unpleasant effects of being on the receiving end of persecution. Thus, persecution of the Mormon faithful became a badge of purpose and surety for many Mormons, even as they disliked suffering its punishments.

Smith and other Church leaders viewed these almost constant persecutions as evidence that God had singled out the Mormon population to complete God's work on

²³ Jeffrey Walker, "Mormon Land Rights in Caldwell and Daviess Counties," Mormon History Association Conference, Salt Lake City, Utah, May 26, 2007, now published in *BYU Studies*. Stephen LeSueur also discusses the smaller dimensions of Caldwell County in his work.

Earth. God's chosen people had constantly suffered at the hands of the unfaithful from Abraham in ancient Mesopotamia to the early Church in Roman times. Jesus' crucifixion demonstrated God's triumph over sin and discrimination, but it failed to prevent those from occurring in everyday life. Suffering economic trials at the hands of dishonest men occurred constantly in the lives of Smith, his family, and countless numbers of Saints. The Ginseng Fiasco in the 1820s frustrated the Smith family and financially devastated them when their hard work to produce ginseng for a significant profit disappeared in the hands of a swindler. That financial loss precipitated losing the family farm and subsequent moves that created a sense of unease and lack of stability for the Smith family.²⁴ On a larger scale, losing property in Jackson County and Kirtland, Ohio, decreased the temporal power of the Church through economic venues. In addition, a number of revelations directed at economic issues, including the store house and tithing, instructed financially challenged Saints to enjoy some semblance of a better life if they followed the principles outlined in the Law of Consecration revelations.²⁵ Mormonism's emphasis on hard work and faithfulness to God's promised blessings proved a vital aspect of religious conviction as Saints moved out of Missouri into Illinois and eventually to the Great Salt Lake Valley where the Mormon faithful struggled to build a thriving community in an arid environment. Mormon writings consistently stated that God would be faithful and protect the Saints and develop his kingdoms, if the Saints upheld God's commandments and followed his instructions.

²⁴ Bushman, *Joseph Smith and the Beginnings of Mormonism*, p. 30.

²⁵ Bushman, *Joseph Smith and the Beginnings of Mormonism*, p. 80.

The establishment of the Church of Christ in 1830 also coincided with the larger Primitivism movement in a number of Protestant denominations during the antebellum period. During the late 1700s and first half of the 1800s, many Protestant groups broke into Primitive and anti-Primitive factions with disagreements over the relevance of the development of Christianity over time. Early American Primitivism existed in the Puritan Church with the rejection of rituals, images, and iconography, but nineteenth century Primitivism incorporated egalitarianism and the role of the common man into rejection of the Medieval Church.²⁶ Nineteenth century American Primitivism followed the belief that the development of the Christian Church and subsequent theological and doctrinal developments should have little to no bearing on the contemporary practice of Christianity in antebellum American society. Instead, God had provided each human with the intelligence and personal ability to decipher commandments and directions for living. Political developments during the Age of Jackson and social changes that took place during the Market Revolution buttressed changes in religious Primitivism and the rejection of the absolute authority of clerics and other religious leaders. An emphasis on laypersons, exhorters, and other untrained religious leaders to direct ministry all contributed to the egalitarian nature of American Christianity.²⁷

Primitivism in the early nineteenth century sometimes intertwined with an emphasis on restoring the Gospel to standards of the ancient true church. This development helped spur a restoration movement of which Mormonism was a part. By the early 1800s, Alexander Campbell and Barton Stone, founders of the Campbellite

²⁶ Holifield, *Theology in America*, p. 292-293.

²⁷ William Sutton, *Journeymen for Jesus: Evangelical Artisans Confront Capitalism in Jacksonian Baltimore*, (University Park, PA: Pennsylvania State University Press, August 1998).

movement or the Disciples of Christ Church, both rejected clerical power as a part of Primitivism. In addition, the Campbellite faith was a restoration movement with “the two goals of restoring primitive Christianity and attaining the unity of the church.”²⁸ Joseph Smith considered his Church of Christ as the ultimate restoration of Christ’s gospel, which included receiving revelations from an omnipresent deity as well as the discovery and translation of forgotten scriptures and lost books and verses from the Bible. Throughout the Church’s time in Ohio, Smith worked tirelessly to translate the Pearl of Great Price, as well as to restore the Bible to its intended form. By the mid 1830s, Smith had translated a “restored” version of the Old Testament, which included new chapters and verses in a number of Biblical books. These additions corrected mistranslations that medieval translators had made in their copies of Christian scripture. Sidney Rigdon, a vital actor in the early Mormon Church left the Baptist and Campbellite denominations in order to convert to Mormonism. For him, at least, Smith’s restoration principles were the closest to the early Church sought by religious believers through the primitive and restoration movements.²⁹

Perhaps more important than any other religious context, millennialism played a significant factor in how Mormonism developed and matured in Missouri. For Mormons, Zion’s placement in Missouri made the area even more important than it otherwise would have been in Mormon settlement. Losing their position of power in Kirtland significantly hurt the Church’s economic power, but the religious implications of losing Zion to

²⁸ Holifield, *Theology in America*, p. 294.

²⁹ While the Church’s main headquarters was in Kirtland, Ohio, Smith worked to restore the Bible to what he considered its original form. The result is the inclusion of new chapters and verses to many books in the Protestant Bible. This information can be found in more detail in Bushman, *Joseph Smith: Rough Stone Rolling*, pp. 279-292.

irreligious Missouri heathens caused a significant delay in fulfilling God's work. Surety of their position as God's chosen people created tension between early Mormons and the Missourians with whom they interacted. Claims that God would strip the Missourians of their possessions and redeem the land by transferring possession to the Mormons stirred the anger of Missourians. In addition, some Missourian's believed they had to then protect themselves from the prospect of violence from the Mormons. Mormonism's proclivity to evangelize its neighbors by rebuking them as wicked or outside the faith led to mounting conflict towards Mormons from other denominations and non-religious peoples.³⁰

Some of early Mormonism's appeal depended on an imminent return of Christ to Earth and the administration of justice to an unjust world. Like Shakers, Millerites, and other millenarian religious groups, early Mormons had many of the same hopes for and troubles with society during the antebellum period. These ranged from persecution, to ostracism from society, as well as a desire for release from a cruel, oppressive, or rapidly disintegrating world. Emphasis on Christ's return and the end of time directly influenced major events in Mormon history and shaped theological innovations diametrically tied to inherent beliefs in Christ's imminent return.³¹ This return would lead to the establishment of a millennial kingdom with the Mormon faithful reigning alongside Christ over a just and perfect world. Thus, while the Mormon Church faced similar

³⁰ According to Jennings' "Zion is Fled," the gathering of the Saints is the uniquely Mormon theology of the Missouri period. This gathering was a vital aspect of early Mormon millennialism. Warren A. Jennings, "Zion is Fled: The Expulsion of the Mormons from Jackson County, Missouri." (PhD Dissertation, University of Florida, 1962).

³¹ Grant Underwood argues that millenarianism played such a vital role in early Mormonism that the religion cannot be taken out of a millenarian context. Further information can also be found in the following work: Lawrence Foster, *Religion and Sexuality: Three American Communal Experiments of the Nineteenth Century*, (New York: Oxford University Press, 1981).

problems as other persecuted groups, Mormons often remained segregated from their neighbors and maintained their own unique place in God's celestial plan. This distinctiveness and the resulting persecution of the Saints in Missouri helped drive theological developments to become more radical or less mainstream by the time the community sought asylum in Illinois in the early 1840s.³²

Just as Mormons cannot be viewed outside the context of millenarianism and the religious landscape of antebellum America, Missourians who were religious leaders and actors must also be given the same consideration. By providing Missourians with the same courtesy given the Mormon participants in the 1830s conflict, this study seeks to “comprehend religion and society in the same narrative [which] allows for a story with flesh and blood instead of a bloodless ballet of abstract dogmas.”³³ Scant attention has been paid (at least by non-Mormon historians) to the role of non-Mormon religious leaders in this conflict; instead, economic and political issues are almost always used to explain the conflict. However, newspaper articles, diaries, journals, and the Missouri War Papers (official documents from the state of Missouri and Missouri militia leaders during the 1838 conflict) identify a number of religious leaders as taking armed action against their Missouri neighbors. This evidence demonstrates the profound importance of religion during the 1830s conflicts—for both sides. In fact, religion existed as a systemic cause of the conflicts, not as a peripheral element. While Mormons believed they were following God's call, many Missourians believed the same. As a result, the Missouri

³² See Marvin Hill's chapter entitled “Wanted: A Refuge for the Unconverted, Religiously Disoriented, and Poor” in *Quest for Refuge*.

³³ Noll, *America's God*, p. 6.

Mormon conflicts became a holy war that is too often dismissed, at least by non-Mormons, as a political and economic conflict.

Although in their writings many Mormons referred to Missourians as heathenish and irreligious, at least some Missourians who became involved in the Missouri-Mormon conflicts throughout the 1830s were Protestant ministers, missionaries, and other religious leaders. Many of those leaders saw Missourians as heathenish and irreligious too and sought to instill Christian principles in the frontier state.³⁴ During the Mormon's stay in Jackson County, Baptist missionary Isaac McCoy played an integral role in the violent outbreaks that took place in November 1833. Fellow influential Baptists Robert and Thomas Fristoe also participated in community discussions regarding the Mormon problem in Jackson County in the months leading up to the violence. Presbyterian minister Finis Ewing and former Presbyterian missionary Benton Pixley played key roles in how the two sides viewed each other and the way the general public received information about the conflict as well. Almost surely, these men's religious beliefs influenced the decisions they made and actions they took in the conflicts.

Missouri religious leaders also played crucial roles in the social and religious disagreements that took place after the Saints' expulsion from Jackson County. Eventual Disciples of Christ convert Peter Burnett published a newspaper called the *Far West* in Clay County in 1836, printing articles that outlined the problems with Mormonism and the threat the religious community posed to the county that provided refuge for many of the Mormons who had been exiled from Jackson County.³⁵ Members of other Protestant

³⁴ Walter B. Stevens, *Missouri: The Center State, 1823-1915*, (St. Louis: The S. J. Clarke Publishing Company, 1915), p. 251; Paul C. Nagel, *Missouri: A Bicentennial History*, (New York: W. W. Norton, 1977), pp. 89-90, 121, 187-188.

denominations led county militias against the Mormon fighting units in 1838. Samuel Bogart, Samuel Lucas, and Sashel Woods all identified with Protestant denominations before involvement in the war, and each continued to be active in religious affairs after the war's end.³⁶ While some historians (and some religious actors themselves) argue differences in religious beliefs played a minor role in the conflicts, the importance of religious beliefs in antebellum American life indicated something quite different. As Jennings notes, "Inevitably, his [McCoy's] attitude toward the Mormons would have been shaped by his own religious background" regardless of attempts to remain a mediating force in the conflict.³⁷

While this study focuses almost exclusively on the importance of religion and following God's call for early Mormon adherents, it also fits into a much larger argument regarding the conflict between Mormon doctrine and other Christian denominations present in Missouri during the 1830s. A number of studies in Mormon history and the Missouri conflict focus on the widely accepted causes of the Missouri Mormon War.³⁸ These include such factors as the political nature of Mormons and the insular economy of Mormon adherents. Others involve Mormon desires to buy large tracts of land and attempts to befriend the hostile Native American tribes living along the western Missouri border. The Mormons' general background as Yankees also caused conflicts in a state settled primarily by southerners. Most certainly, the unique religious beliefs of Mormons

³⁵ *Far West*, The State Historical Society of Missouri, University of Missouri.

³⁶ Parley P. Pratt, *History of the Late Persecution Inflicted by the State of Missouri Upon the Mormons*, (Detroit: Dawson and Bates, 1839), p. 29.

³⁷ Warren A. Jennings, "Isaac McCoy and the Mormons," *Missouri Historical Review*, LXI No. 1, (October 1966): 62-82.

³⁸ LeSueur, *The 1838 Mormon War in Missouri*, pp. 1-7.

(especially the Mormon leadership) created feelings of aversion and anger among Missourians. However, most studies fail to provide an in depth foray into the specific ways the religious beliefs of Mormons and Protestant Christian Missourians related to each other at all. Instead, most studies simply argue that Missourians viewed Mormons as fanatics, radicals, and infidels and leave the reader to discern what that means. Non-Mormon scholars tend to reduce religion as a genuine factor in the 1830s conflicts, while a number of Mormon historians recognize the inherency of religion in the wars so much that they gloss over it in order to examine other factors. Thus, theological comparisons between Mormons and their Protestant counterparts are desperately needed to more clearly understand what prompted such violent outbreaks as those experienced in Missouri during the 1830s.

Larger trends in Mormon historiography tend to view the Missouri experience of Mormons as essentially similar to Mormon experiences in other areas of the United States, with one major exception—the Missouri experience was much more violent. Mormon believers were driven from or left upstate New York; Kirtland, Ohio; Independence, Missouri; Far West (and other towns in northwest), Missouri; Nauvoo, Illinois; and various locations in Iowa and Nebraska before settling in the far west in present-day Utah. Even the Mormon state of Deseret failed to provide a safe haven for Mormon adherents as evidenced by the Mormon War in Utah during the 1850s.³⁹ If the main reasons for disagreements between Missourians and their Mormon neighbors revolved around political and economic disputes only, then Mormons should have suffered a similar level of intense mistreatments in areas of the country where the non-

³⁹ See Marvin Hill's *Quest for Refuge* for information about the Utah period in Mormon history.

Mormon residents adhered to similar economic and political beliefs. Mormon theology created a division where politics and economics were concerned, as well as a religious division. Although political beliefs surely affected how Missourians and Mormons viewed each other during the early years of the Mormon Church, those differences have been more studied than theological disagreements between the groups. Most likely, political, economic, and social differences coupled with theological clashes heightened tensions in Missouri during the 1830s enough to justify in Missourians' minds armed action and an extermination order in 1838.

Many sources provide substantial evidence that Missourians' acceptance of Mormons changed dramatically over the course of the 1830s. Articles in several nineteenth century newspapers present Missourians cautioning against armed action toward Mormon adherents, especially during their settlement in Independence. During the early 1830s, most articles reflected Missourians' desires to act rationally and calmly towards their Mormon neighbors, and especially to act within the bounds of the law. As the Mormon population continued to increase in Jackson County, some Missourians began to lose patience with the religious group. Still, observers of the situation living in other parts of the state (Jefferson City, St. Louis, and Boone County in particular) cautioned Jackson County residents to use restraint and adhere to the laws of the land. Even when Mormons were driven from Jackson County entirely, newspapers reported that Missourians distrusted Mormon leadership, not the general Mormon population. However, by the late 1830s, Missourians' opinions about Mormons had become significantly more hostile to the entire religious population rather than concentrating on Mormon leadership. In the months leading up to the October 1838 extermination order,

many Missourians attempted to limit armed action against the Mormons.⁴⁰ Yet, by October 1838, the state began military action against the Mormons. What, then, caused this shift in attitudes toward the Missouri Mormons? What made Missourians lose patience with the religious group, and how did that justify the extent to which the state militia punished the Mormons for their religious, political, and social beliefs?

In order to view both sides in the Missouri Mormon War as actors with religious faith, this study is divided into three sections—the time period of Mormon settlement in Jackson County, Mormon settlement in Clay and Caldwell counties up to June 1838, and the Missouri Mormon experience from July 4, 1838, until Smith’s escape from custody to Nauvoo in April 1839. Each section will contain one chapter focused on the Mormon viewpoint juxtaposed with another from a non-Mormon religious mindset. Together these glimpses into the past should provide insight into the motivations behind each side’s actions.

The first chapter provides the Mormon viewpoint of what Jackson County and Independence meant to the Mormon Church. It focuses on the importance of revelation and the Book of Mormon to the adherents as well as the importance of Joseph Smith as God’s revelator. Smith came to Jackson County only twice during the Saints’ three-year residence in Independence, instead relying on Edward Partridge, Sidney Gilbert, W.W. Phelps, and Jesse Gause (among others) for the leadership of the Missouri Saints. W.W. Phelps ran the *Evening and Morning Star*, the publication that caused friction between Missourians and Mormons. This newspaper published revelations from Kirtland, the highly contentious “Free People of Color” article, and Mormon accounts of the conflicts

⁴⁰ LeSueur, *The 1838 Mormon War in Missouri*, pp. 150-153.

between Mormons and their Missouri neighbors. In it Isaac McCoy, Finis Ewing, and Benton Pixley were identified as religious leaders who led Missourians in persecution against the Mormon Church.

Chapter two tells the stories of one of these Missouri religious leaders. Isaac McCoy was a Baptist missionary to the Native American tribes who lived in present-day Kansas and Nebraska. He was appointed by the federal government to missionize the Indians and Americanize them as much as possible. He was based out of Independence where his wife lived, but also had family who lived in Indiana, southeast Missouri, and modern-day Kansas. Despite being accused by the Mormons of driving members of the Church from Independence, there is little evidence in McCoy's writing that he cared one way or another about the Mormons, except for his direct comments on the November 1833 conflict. As Fluhman argues, McCoy's refusal to acknowledge Mormonism as a legitimate faith does not mean his religious beliefs failed to influence his role as a leader of the mob. McCoy consistently focused on missionizing the Indians, conflicts within the Baptist denomination, and theological differences with rival denominations. To him, the Saints threatened his work because he viewed Mormonism as illegitimate.

Chapters three and four consider the time period from the end of the 1833 conflict to mid-1838. After expulsion from Jackson County in late 1833, Mormons regrouped and attempted to return to their Zion. The largest bulk of the faithful gathered in Clay County, directly to the north of Jackson County. At first, the Saints received fair treatment from the Missourians and worked with Alexander Doniphan, a successful lawyer, to seek redress for the persecution against them. During 1834, Joseph Smith led a group of Church members on a military expedition (Zion's Camp) to retake their sacred

county.⁴¹ In addition, internal conflicts within the growing religious community caused dissension within the ranks of the Mormon Church. Disagreements regarding leadership over the western Saints grew between Missouri and Ohio leadership. Some members left the Church, while others were excommunicated in 1836, 1837, and 1838. Eventually, Clay County residents tired of their Mormon neighbors and wanted them out. The creation of Caldwell County as a Mormon refuge in 1836 seemed to answer the Mormon problem, but continued Mormon emigration and religious zeal resulted in conflict with Missouri neighbors in neighboring Daviess and Carroll counties. The Mormon settlement of Dewitt was attacked, and Missourians threatened vigilante justice against their Mormon neighbors. As the Mormon Church fought against frustrated Missourians, leadership within the group sought to purge undesirables from the congregation. Sidney Rigdon's Independence Day speech and Salt Sermon demonstrated discontent within the Mormon Church and foreshadowed the military conflict between the Church and the Missouri population.⁴²

After Mormon expulsion from Jackson County, the bulk of the Mormon population moved to Clay County, while another segment moved to the south. As Mormons sought redress, citizens of Clay County attempted to make the religious group feel welcome and denounced the actions of their Jackson County neighbors until they lost patience with the demands of their Mormon neighbors for acceptance and restitution. Finis Ewing, a Presbyterian minister in western Missouri at the time of the Jackson County conflict, was identified by Mormons as a leader of the persecution in

⁴¹ Thomas M. Spencer, editor, *The Missouri Mormon Experience*, (Columbia: University of Missouri Press, 2010).

⁴² F. Mark McKiernan, "Sidney Rigdon's Missouri Speeches," *BYU Studies*, 11 No. 1, (1970): 1-5.

Independence and one who disagreed with Alexander Doniphan's representation of the religious group during the 1834 court cases. Ewing left several sources that identified his theological beliefs as well as a plethora of letters to a number of politicians and influential Missourians during the 1820s and 1830s categorizing himself as a Jackson man.⁴³ In addition, Benton Pixley was closely involved with the 1833 conflict in Independence. Frequently quoted in the *Missouri Intelligencer* and other Missouri newspapers, Pixley demonstrated his distaste for Mormons in a public venue. Together, these religious actors, in particular, provide a window into the minds of religious Missourians during this conflict. Peter Hardeman Burnett's newspaper, *Far West*, reflected the frustration of Clay County residents in 1836. Burnett, an adherent of the Disciples of Christ Church following the Mormon War, was the editor of *The Far West*, which warned Clay County residents of the threat that Mormons posed to the community. Articles in the paper include warnings from non-Mormons in Kirtland, Ohio, and the surrounding areas regarding Mormons and their intentions for Missouri emigration. The newspaper almost certainly helped turn public opinion against the Mormon Church during the interim between the Jackson County conflict and 1838 war.

When war broke out between the Mormon community and the Missouri militia in late September and October of 1838, Mormon leadership responded by defending themselves and their beliefs. While disagreements still ensue about the extent to which Smith and other Mormon leaders encouraged violence, a series of military conflicts resulted from the ideological clashes between Missourians and Mormons. The Haun's

⁴³ Franceway Fanna Cossitt, *The Life and Times of Rev. Finis Ewing, One of the Fathers and Founders of the Cumberland Presbyterian Church to Which is Added Remark's on Davidson's History or, a Review of His Chapters on the Revival of 1800, and His History of the Cumberland Presbyterians*, (Louisville, KY: Cumberland Presbyterian Church, 1853).

Mill Massacre, which took place two days after Governor Boggs issued the 1838 Extermination Order, demonstrates the intensity of the conflict and resulted in bitter feelings, anger, and frustration of Mormons towards Missourians that still continue today.⁴⁴ Despite setbacks to the religious community, Smith and other Mormon leaders encouraged Mormon adherents to remain faithful to the religion and loyal to the Mormon Church.

During the military conflict in 1838, a number of religious leaders helped lead the Missouri militia and other forms of vigilante violence against the Mormon community. In addition, the conflation of political and religious beliefs by Mormon leaders was reflected in Missouri leadership as the Mormon War started. Influential Missourians, many of whom were judges, senators, and other civic leaders worked together to ensure Mormons were deprived of their land holdings in northwest Missouri—especially in the Mormon settlement of Adam-ondi-Ahman. Although several of the leaders of the Missouri militia held sincere religious beliefs, the combination of republican rhetoric and the rule of law created a new religious language during the war.⁴⁵

Once the military conflict was over, Missouri politicians, lawyers, community leaders, and religious leaders disagreed about the extent of mistreatment of the Saints. A number of Mormon adherents were adamant that their land be returned to them, while several members of Mormon leadership (include the Prophet Joseph Smith) awaited trial in jail. Although public opinion was against the Mormons, Smith's lawyers demanded a

⁴⁴ Beth S. Moore, *Bones in the Well: The Haun's Mill Massacre of 1838*, (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 2012).

⁴⁵ LeSueur, *The 1838 Mormon War in Missouri*, pp. 231-232.

fair trial and redress for crimes perpetrated against members of the Mormon Church.⁴⁶

The trial represented how both the Mormon Church and Missouri society were fractured by the conflict. A number of Mormon dissenters testified against the Mormon leaders while Missourians disagreed about the treatment by members of the Missouri militia of Mormon military personnel. Although Smith's escape to Illinois ended the Missouri trial, feelings of distrust by Missourians towards Mormons continued while over the next decade while Nauvoo grew.

Following the expulsion of the Saints from Missouri, the Mormon Church built a successful community on the banks of the Mississippi River at Nauvoo, Illinois. In the six years between Smith's escape from a Missouri jail and his assassination in a Carthage jail, a number of theological developments became public and differentiated the Mormon religion from other mainstream Protestant denominations.⁴⁷ The Missouri period of Mormon history continues to represent a period of frustration, anger, hurt, abuse, and persecution almost 175 years after the 1838 conflict. Not surprisingly, Missouri Mormon exiles felt the pain of the experience much more fully then than others do today. The trauma of the Missouri experience dramatically shaped the development of Mormon theology, community, family, and ideology over the next two centuries of Mormon history and many Missourians held resentment for years after as well. Revelations regarding a multi-leveled Heaven, restoration of families, and polygamy drove a wedge between the Saints and Protestant groups that lasted for decades and continue to influence perception of Mormons in modern American society.

⁴⁶ LeSueur, *The 1838 Mormon War in Missouri*, pp. 250-254.

⁴⁷ Bushman, *Joseph Smith: Rough Stone Rolling*, pp. 436-455.

When the Mormon contingent left Missouri and crossed the Mississippi River back into Illinois in the cold winter of 1838 and 1839, they left a state that had treated them so harshly it caused systemic and drastic changes in the way the Saints lived, believed, and worshipped. The Mormon Church lamented the loss of the Missouri Zion, placing blame upon themselves for failing to adhere strictly enough to God's commandments to fend off the marauding Missourians, but also placing blame on Missouri residents, Governor Lilburn Boggs, and the nation. Missouri is the place that Mormonism finds itself as outside of the mainstream regardless of how closely most Mormons identified as American. The conflicts in Missouri provide the context for much of the "radical," outside the mainstream theological developments that identify it as both peculiarly American and Mormon. The development of polygamy, eternal families, celestial marriage, and other Mormon theologies fully developed in Nauvoo after the expulsion. In addition, eventual removal from Nauvoo which resulted from Illinoisans' reaction to Mormon theology helped Brigham Young solidify the bulk of Mormon membership in a religious movement that became the powerful modern-day Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints.⁴⁸ While many experiences contributed to the power and insular nature of today's LDS Church, the harsh treatment of the Saints in Missouri and Illinois certainly contributed to that development as well.

⁴⁸ Bushman, *Joseph Smith: Rough Stone Rolling*, pp. 551-559.

Chapter 1—Claiming Zion

On the fifth page of the June 1833 edition, the *Evening and Morning Star* published haunting words, “No one can hesitate, or even doubt, but that the crisis is near at hand that will try men’s souls, who has searched faithfully the sacred record that was given by inspiration. Every thing seems to whisper: The great day approaches.”¹ For members of the newly formed Church of Christ (eventually the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints), the “great day” signified the second coming of Christ to Zion and the judgment and punishment of non-believers as well as persecutors of the Mormon faith. Because of Mormonism’s proclivity to evangelize its neighbors by rebuking them as wicked or outside the faith in combination with political and economic disagreements, interactions between Mormons and Missourians led to mounting anger towards Mormons from members of other denominations and non-religious peoples.² Despite this dire warning of doom for non-believers, a relative peace between Mormons and non-Mormon Missourians stretched into the late summer and early fall of 1833 as Mormon adherents continued migrating to Jackson County, religious leadership in Ohio received revelations about Zion’s role in Mormonism, and the Church’s publications reported that recent signs indicated an imminent judgment. For early Mormonism, Jackson County became the most important spot in the millennial development of the religion; a Promised Land that many hoped would provide a safe haven from persecution and criticism from non-believers. Independence’s importance stemmed from Mormonism’s emphasis on

¹ *Evening and Morning Star*, June 1833, 5-2.

² Underwood, *The Millenarian World of Early Mormonism*, pp. 31-35; Edwin Duane Follick, “The Cultural Influence of Mormonism In Early Nineteenth Century America,” (PhD Disseration, St. Andrews Collegiate Church College, 1958), pp. 100-101; and LeSueur, *The 1838 Mormon War in Missouri*, pp. 26-27.

experiential religion and revelation, Smith's importance as a prophet, and the canonization of these revelations in the Doctrine and Covenants, which were first published as Smith received the revelations in the *Evening and Morning Star* and then in 1833 in the *Book of Commandments*. Persecution and mistreatment because of these beliefs buttressed claims they were the elect because of the inherent nature of persecution in millennial thought. Because Saints believed they were the elect, persecution by Missourians played a vital role in the development of a unique religious community during the Missouri period.

In June 1831, Joseph Smith, Jr., received a revelation given to Newel Knight that commanded Knight to "take your journey into the regions westward, unto the land of Missouri, unto the borders of the Lamanites" in order to help establish the city of Zion in Independence, Jackson County.³ The revelation given by Smith to members of the Church in the branch at Thompson, Ohio, provided guidance for the Mormon faithful after a controversy regarding land consecration divided loyalties within the growing Church in Ohio. In addition, Smith announced that members of the Thompson branch of the Church had broken their covenant with God by improperly using land as well as failing to establish proper communal living arrangements. As a result, the revelation instructed Knight to leave for Missouri "lest your enemies come upon you."⁴ The importance of the establishment of Zion in western Missouri and the implications of that doctrine in how non-Mormons viewed the group play a considerable role in Mormon

³ A *Book of Commandments for the Government of the Church of Christ, Organized According to the Law on the 6th of April, 1830*, (Zion: W. W. Phelps & Co., 1833), pp. 123-127. This is also Section XVI of the *Doctrine and Covenants*.

⁴ *Book of Commandments*, pp. 123-127.

history, especially during the early years in Jackson County, and the collective memory of the Missouri experience. Noted historian Grant Underwood suggests that examining early Mormonism through a millenarian lens provides the best opportunity for understanding the significance of Zion-building and the establishment of a millennial kingdom commanded by God for the early Mormon Church.⁵ Nathan Hatch claims that for many religious groups during the early nineteenth century, prophecy and beliefs regarding the significance of apocalyptic events provided believers with an understanding of confusing and troubled times.⁶ Thus, the years the Saints spent in Missouri represent a time period during which Mormon religious beliefs developed and evolved similarly to other Protestant denominations. During the early period of the Mormon Church, even Smith's mother, Lucy Mack Smith, believed Mormonism was a part of the larger Protestant movement, much like the Methodist faith she practiced before her son founded the Mormon Church. When met with opposition from non-believers, she claimed, "I endeavored to show them the similarity between these principles [Mormon beliefs], and the simplicity of the Gospel taught by Jesus Christ in the New Testament."⁷ James H. Eells, a non-Mormon from Kirtland, Ohio, agreed about the religious similarities by saying, "Aside from the delusion of Mormonism, they have the appearance of being devout Christians" because they "abound in prayers and other acts of devotion." Since Eells claimed many of the Mormon faithful were converts from the Baptist and Methodist

⁵ Underwood, *The Millenarian World of Early Mormonism*, p. 10.

⁶ Hatch, *The Democratization of American Christianity*, p. 6.

⁷ A. Russell Mortensen and William Mulder, editors, *Among the Mormons: Historic Accounts by Contemporary Observers*, (New York: Knopf), p. 40.

sects, similarities between Mormons and other Protestants would be expected.⁸ However, circumstances and events in Jackson County (and later northwest Missouri) caused tensions that led the group's theology to diverge from the mainstream.⁹

Together, Underwood and Hatch's arguments suggest that early Mormonism enjoyed many commonalities with other Protestant denominations with whom they competed for converts. Religious conflict between Mormons and other religious Americans was hardly new, even during the first decade of the Mormon Church's existence. Anger over the Book of Mormon and other beliefs had already forced Joseph Smith to shift the Church's center from upstate New York to Kirtland, Ohio, while other Mormon faithful attempted to establish the Missouri Zion. Although clashes between Mormons and non-believers was common in many locations, the Mormon experience in Missouri defined the point at which Mormonism irrevocably separated from mainstream Protestantism in the United States until well into the twentieth century. While the location and importance of Zion to Mormonism is one reason for the deepening division, the conflict in Jackson County also witnessed a shift of Missourians' anger from Mormon leadership to include the larger Mormon population by late 1833. In addition, non-Mormon Missourians (including religious leadership) endured significant criticism for their treatment of Mormons from outside of the immediate area of Jackson County during

⁸ Mortenson, *Among the Mormons*, p. 88.

⁹ See Bushman, *Joseph Smith and the Beginnings of Mormonism*; Bushman, *Joseph Smith: Rough Stone Rolling*, John L. Brook, *The Refiner's Fire: The Making of Mormon Cosmology, 1644-1844*, (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1996); Daniel Erickson, *As a Thief in the Night: The Mormon Quest for Millennial Deliverance*, (Salt Lake City: Signature Books, 1998); Terryl L. Givens, *By the Hand of Mormon: The American Scripture that Launched a New World Religion*, (New York: Oxford University Press, 2003); Hill, *Quest for Refuge*; Michael Quinn, *Early Mormonism and the Magic World View*, (Salt Lake City: Signature Books, 1998); and Shipp, *Mormonism* for more information about the origins of Mormonism and the Church's early development.

the 1833 conflict. Despite religious similarities between Mormons and other Protestant groups in late 1833, armed conflict, property destruction, and expulsion from Jackson County drove a wedge between the religious groups that deepened throughout the rest of the nineteenth century and allowed Mormonism to become distinct.¹⁰ After Mormons were expelled from Jackson County, early Mormon theology shifted in order to allow for the problems encountered in 1833. In turn, this shift separated early Mormon theology from other Protestant denominations.

In order to understand why Mormonism diverged from other Protestant denominations during the Missouri period, one must first appreciate the integral nature of Zionism to the Mormon faith. The Mormon Church's leader and first prophet, Joseph Smith, received a communication from God in June 1830 to translate and release information contained in two lost books of scripture not included in the Book of Mormon, the books of Moses and Abraham. Both books included substantial segments of prophecy and provided evidence that nineteenth century Mormons comprised the fragment of population deemed worthy by God to usher in the new Millennium on Earth. The Book of Moses includes prophecy regarding Zion and the End Times and provides details about the Promised Land's freedom from persecution, grief, and tribulations that God further revealed to Smith at later dates. In nineteenth-century Mormon theology, the Promised Land referred to the western area of Missouri, which was deemed Zion according to Joseph Smith's revelations. Throughout the Book of Moses, God speaks to Enoch and declares that "I [God] will come in the last days, in the days of wickedness and vengeance to fulfil {sic} the oath" made to the chosen people—in this case, followers

¹⁰ William A. Jennings' "Zion is Fled" is still considered the most complete recounting of the 1833 military conflict and aftermath.

of the Mormon faith. Zion itself represented a location where “the earth shall rest . . . for the space of a thousand years” and presented Mormons with a place where mankind could commune with God as well as a position from which to provide political and spiritual leadership for the world.¹¹

Zion in Independence stood for a temporal home to where persecuted members in Ohio and other eastern states could flee and, after the temporal world had been destroyed, a spiritual realm where Christ would reign with his Saints during the End Times. The assurance of a peaceful millennial kingdom and the fulfillment of God’s promises to His faithful servants solidified the importance of Zion in the early Mormon faith. Even before God revealed Zion’s location, revelations in 1829, 1830, and early 1831 highlighted the importance of this belief in Mormonism. In at least three 1829 revelations, Mormon adherents were encouraged to “Seek to bring forth and establish my Zion” by keeping God’s commandments revealed to Smith as well as those in the Christian Bible.¹² If believers remained faithful and helped establish Zion, God promised through revelation “you shall have eternal life, which gift is the greatest of all the gifts of God.”¹³ Some revelations targeted specific Mormon leaders, such as William McLellin and Oliver Cowdery, with particular tasks for the furthering of Zion, while others presented directives to the general Mormon population. Yet, each revelation linked the

¹¹ Joseph Smith, *Pearl of Great Price*, (Salt Lake City: The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, 1928), The Book of Moses, 7:60, 64.

¹² *Book of Commandments*, p. 32. Although Smith received revelations as early as 1823, the *Doctrines and Covenants* was not published until 1835. However, a number of revelations that were included in the 1835 edition were published in *The Evening and Morning Star* in Independence, Missouri, during 1833.

¹³ *Book of Commandments*, p. 32.

order to work for the establishment of Zion with keeping God's commandments.

Without faithful followers, Zion would never be founded.

That Zion's establishment meant the fulfillment of God's promises certainly influenced the importance of millennialism for Mormons. In a September 1830 revelation given to Joseph Smith, the Prophet revealed these words, "Unto whom I have committed the keys to my kingdom...and for the fullness of times...I will gather together in one all things...lift up your hearts and rejoice....that ye may be able to withstand the evil, having done all ye may be able to stand."¹⁴ The return of Christ for his faithful and the Millennial Kingdom represented the fulfillment of what God had promised during Christ's lifetime and before the crucifixion. Since Mormonism was to the believers the restoration and fulfillment of the true Christian faith, the culmination of God's promises would come when the faithful were gathered to Zion and the Millennial Kingdom established. Without Zion, there could be no fulfillment; with Zion, the Saints could rejoice in their religious triumph and help reign in the perfect kingdom. As a result, Zionism played a vital role during the years the Mormon faith flourished and provided the promise that God would elevate the faithful over those who chose to ignore or reject the new religion.¹⁵

The importance of the establishment of Zion in western Missouri and the implications of that doctrine in how non-Mormons viewed the group also play a considerable role in Mormon history, especially during the early years in Jackson County and the collective memory of the Missouri experience. Zion was so significant to early

¹⁴ *Book of Commandments*, p. 61-67.

¹⁵ Underwood, *The Millenarian World of Early Mormonism*, pp. 31-36.

Mormonism that Underwood argues early Mormonism cannot be taken out of a millenarian context and that major events and theological innovations resulted from inherent beliefs in Christ's imminent return. However, before Mormon adherents could reign in Zion, the location of the future kingdom had to be revealed. The search for this prophetic place and the establishment of a community from which the beginnings of this earthly kingdom would spring appeared to end in 1831 when another revelation came to the Church's leader about a place called Missouri.

Settling the location for worship, refuge, and community as well as fulfilling the prophetic verses in the Book of Moses began as early as July 1831 when the Prophet received a revelation concerning the specific site of Zion. In it, Smith claimed that Missouri "is the land which I [God] have appointed and consecrated for the gathering of the Saints: . . . this is the land of promise, and the place for the city of Zion."¹⁶ Smith asserted that "Independence is the Center Place, and the spot for the temple is lying westward upon a lot which is not far from the courthouse." Thus, Smith insisted that "the land should be purchased by the Saints" and gave instructions for which land the Saints should buy as well as how to acquire the necessary money and plans for spreading out from the "Center Place."¹⁷ On August 2, 1831, Smith and other Mormon leaders consecrated the newly purchased ground in Independence and began building a log cabin that marked the first structure in the formation of Zion. Smith declared through revelation, "Blessed are they whose feet stand upon the land of Zion . . . for they shall

¹⁶ *Book of Commandments*, p. 133-139.

¹⁷ *Book of Commandments*, p. 133-139.

receive for their reward the good things of the earth.”¹⁸ With the beginning of Zion’s construction, the Saints’ optimism blossomed. However, Independence failed to provide the haven Smith and other Mormons believed God promised them.

Zion’s importance to the early Mormon faith is further revealed by the method through which Smith and the young Church received information regarding its location, purpose, and establishment. The promise of a millennial kingdom named Zion came from assurances of its existence through sources Mormons consider scripture—the Book of Mormon, the Book of Moses (in the *Pearl of Great Price*), and revelations later published in the *Book of Commandments* and the *Doctrine and Covenants*, all of which became accessible in print format during the 1830s. While those who failed to convert to Mormonism often questioned the authenticity of the Mormon scriptures, those who did convert vehemently believed they provided guidance for everyday life. B. Winchester, a Mormon convert and minister, claimed, “I know the Book of Mormon to be true; and all the inventions and slanders which the Devil and his servants can invent, will never shake my faith in it.”¹⁹ For this experiential denomination, continuing revelations constituted a significant portion of religious doctrine and perpetuated the relevance of religion to everyday life.

Published in Zion in 1833, the *Book of Commandments* includes the sixty-five revelations that had previously been printed in the *Evening and Morning Star*. Each of the entries is prefaced by an explanation about the purpose of the revelation, several of which are in direct response to concerns of the Mormon faithful. For example, a January

¹⁸ *Book of Commandments*, p. 140-142.

¹⁹ B. Winchester, *The Origin of the Spaulding Story*, Philadelphia: Brown, Bicking & Guilbert, 1840.

1831 revelation commanded the Mormon faithful to remove from New York to Ohio because of persecution suffered by their New York neighbors.²⁰ John Corrill, another Mormon convert, argued revelations demonstrated God's intentions for his people by claiming, "I found, on searching the Scriptures, that from the commencement of time, through every age, God continued to send prophets to the people, and always when God had a message for the people, he chose a special messenger to send it by."²¹ Corrill and the rest of the Saints believed their prophet was the same as the head of the Mormon Church. For Mormons, religion was a living, ever-developing foundation of life that was driven and guided by God's conversations with his people.

For non-believers (and perhaps some believers) Smith's revelations failed to provide enough assurance that God had chosen to establish Jackson County as the center of Zion and Joseph Smith, Jr., as his prophet. For those who did believe in Smith's divine appointment as God's antebellum prophet, the revelations Smith related stood alongside the Bible and the Book of Mormon as sacred scripture. Warren A. Jennings establishes the significance of revelation to the conflict when he writes, "The Mormons acted upon these revelations on the basis that they emanated from divine sources. The non-Mormons took the opposite position and acted accordingly."²² Unlike some mainstream Protestant denominations who sought to shed enthusiasm and other aspects of experiential religion during the 1830s, early Mormonism embraced the role of revelation in revealing God's developing commandments through Joseph Smith and other

²⁰ *Book of Commandments*, p. 80.

²¹ John Corrill, *A Brief History of the Church of Christ of Latter Day Saints (Commonly Called Mormons)*, St. Louis, 1839.

²² Jennings, "Zion is Fled," p. v.

religious leadership.²³ Thus, Zion's significance to the Mormon faith was buttressed during the early 1830s by extensive references to the theological concept in a number of revelations and other works of Mormon scripture.²⁴

Relevance of revelations to the early Mormon faith also stemmed from the willingness of Mormon believers to accept that Joseph Smith was a prophet ordained by God. Smith never claimed to create the revelations; instead, the vast majority of the revelations included direct claims that they were the word of God, while the rest carried that same implication. For example, the August 7, 1831, revelation regarding the settlement of Zion in Missouri ended with the words, "I, the Lord have spoken it, and the Spirit beareth record. Amen."²⁵ Richard Bushman's *Joseph Smith: Rough Stone Rolling* thoroughly documents the establishment of Smith as God's prophet during the 1820s and early 1830s and the validity Smith's status gave the revelations and Church leadership. Bushman argues, "The *Book of Mormon* not only prepares the way for itself by ridiculing those who think the Bible sufficient; it warns readers against restricting God in the present."²⁶ Oral instructions were immediately written down and canonized by 1833 when the *Book of Commandments* became part of scriptural references. Thus, Zion's significance to the Mormon faith was buttressed during the early 1830s by extensive

²³ See Hatch, *The Democratization of American Christianity* and Christine Leigh Heyrman, *Southern Cross: The Beginnings of the Bible Belt*, (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 1997) for information about religious denominations shifting to "respectability" during the 1830s.

²⁴ Holifield, *Theology in America*, p. 332.

²⁵ *Book of Commandments*, p. 142.

²⁶ Bushman, *Joseph Smith: Rough Stone Rolling*, p. 101.

references to the theological concept in a number of revelations and other works of Mormon scripture.²⁷

Although the Mormon community in Missouri was far distant from Smith and other Church leaders in Ohio, Missouri Mormons enjoyed direct access to revelations and theological developments of Smith and other Church leaders in Ohio through the *Evening and Morning Star*, the Mormon newspaper established in Independence in 1832. As Smith received revelations regarding the establishment and organization of Zion in Missouri in 1831 and 1832, he realized the importance of instituting Church leadership in Missouri as well as solidifying his position as prophet and head of the church in Ohio. William W. Phelps, a newspaper editor from Canandaigua, New York, was one of the only early Mormon converts with experience running a newspaper or a printing press, which made him instrumental in the leadership of the Mormon Church in Jackson County. The *Star* allowed for the continual publication of revelations that came from Smith in Ohio, as well as the revelations that Smith received during his brief visits to Jackson County. Although the same press printed a compilation of Smith's revelations in the *Book of Commandments* in 1833, the *Evening and Morning Star* made these same revelations accessible on a monthly basis for Jackson County Mormons and non-Mormons beginning in June 1832.²⁸ In addition, the press published excerpts of the *Book of Mormon* in monthly installments as well as encouragements and admonishments from Church members and leaders in eastern states. Most important to the millennial nature of

²⁷ Holifield, *Theology in America*, p. 332.

²⁸ Jennings' "Zion is Fled" points out that the *Evening and Morning Star* would have been the only option for a newspaper in Jackson County during the early 1830s. He argues that while the newspaper was a Mormon publication, non-Mormons would have been aware of and mostly read its content.

early Mormonism, the *Star* ran a continuing segment entitled “Signs of the Times,” which was a segment containing national and international news stories depicting events that foretold the coming Millennium. Reports of plagues, diseases, eclipses, conversions of small ethnic groups, and wars all supported Mormon millennial beliefs about an imminent apocalypse.²⁹

As the Saints struggled to build their holy city and help usher in Christ’s reign on Earth, conflicts with Missourians hindered the Saints’ plans. Ironically, Mormonism’s emphasis on revelation, experiential religion, and millennialism certainly contributed to the mistreatment and ultimate expulsion of Mormons from their Missouri Zion. By the early 1830s, mainstream denominations across the nation, such as Baptists, Methodists, Presbyterians, and Christians (or Campbellites), sought to free themselves from the stigma of enthusiasm and move towards religious respectability.³⁰ Non-Mormon Missourians experienced a great revival near the town of Lexington during that same summer while preachers and missionaries bickered over religious differences amongst denominations. From a theological standpoint, mainstream Protestant groups often disagreed with each other’s doctrines as much as they opposed tenets of the Mormon faith.³¹ Despite the apparent calm, by late summer of 1833, the religious landscape of

²⁹ The *Signs of the Times* section usually ran in the fifth or sixth page of each eight-page edition. Thus, this information did not supersede church theology, doctrine, and revelation, but its monthly presence demonstrates its importance.

³⁰ Heyrman, *The Southern Cross*.

³¹ For more information about the religious landscape in antebellum America, see Hatch, *The Democratization of American Christianity*; Richard J. Carwardine, *Evangelicals and Politics in Antebellum America*, (Knoxville, TN: University of Tennessee Press, 1997); Noll, *America’s God*; and Holifield, *Theology in America*.

Missouri indicated arguments over a number of religious beliefs that ultimately exploded into violent conflict and expulsion of Mormons from the state a few years later.

Religious leaders across the Northeast and present-day Midwest lambasted Joseph Smith and other Mormon leaders for publishing the Book of Mormon and launched personal attacks against Mormon religious leaders. In New York and Ohio, the Smith family was accused of laziness, deception, money-seeking, and a number of other nefarious activities, while Alexander Campbell, as one of the founders of the Disciples of Christ, condemned Sidney Rigdon for succumbing to a false religion and engaging in enthusiastic actions, such as conversing with angels and speaking in tongues.³² Shortly after the Mormon experience in Jackson County ended in exile, E.D. Howe, a critic of Mormonism in Painesville, Ohio, published his exposé *Mormonism Unveiled* in October 1834. This book identified problems Ohio residents encountered in their interactions with Mormons in Kirtland and the surrounding areas and included information about the Smith family's life in upstate New York before and during the Book of Mormon's publication. In the Advertisement (introduction) to his work, Howe indicated that he had been encouraged by a number of people to undertake "by reluctance" a description of "the Impostors and their victims of delusion" as the Mormon Church gained adherents during the early 1830s.³³

Although Howe's criticism of Mormonism included "preposterous" accounts regarding attainment of the Golden Tablets and the translation of them, the author also argued that aspects of enthusiasm and experiential religion bothered him as much as the

³² Bushman, *Joseph Smith: Rough Stone Rolling*, p. 89.

³³ E. D. Howe, *Mormonism Unveiled*, Painesville, NY: 1834, p. iv.

separate works of scripture. Howe claims, “Nearly all of their male converts, however ignorant and worthless, were forthwith transformed into ‘Elders,’ and sent forth to proclaim, with all their wild enthusiasm, the wonders and mysteries of Mormonism.”³⁴ Some of those wonders and mysteries included belief in the “supernatural gifts with which...Smith was endowed.” According to Sidney Rigdon, Howe reported that Smith was able to “translate the scriptures from any language in which they were now extant, and could lay his finger upon every interpolation in the sacred writings.”³⁵ Although *Mormonism Unveiled* fails to provide full accounts of the wonders and mysteries to which Howe refers, enthusiastic expressions of religion that Missouri newspapers report in 1833 are most likely similar to those which Howe detested. Not surprisingly, disapproval of Mormon doctrine reached Missouri, and Missouri residents and religious leadership quickly embraced these negative views and added their own criticisms of the new faith. As a result, Independence failed to provide the haven Smith and other Mormons believed God promised them.

Within weeks of Zion’s consecration by Smith and other church leaders, many Missourians rejected religious tenets of Mormonism and culture as well as Mormon settlement in Jackson County. During Smith’s visit to Missouri with eight other male Church leaders in June 1831, social differences between them and the Missourians they encountered were exposed. Smith claimed that he came from “a highly cultivated state,” while Missourians suffered from “the degradation, leanness of intellect, ferocity and

³⁴ Howe, *Mormonism Unveiled*, p. 115.

³⁵ Howe, *Mormonism Unveiled*, p. 113.

jealousy of a people that were nearly a century behind the times.”³⁶ Lucy Mack Smith maintained, that Missourians were the “basest of men and had fled from the face of civilized society to the frontier country to escape the hand of justice.” Joseph Smith, Jr. observed, “[Missouri neighbors also engaged] in their midnight revels, their sabbath breaking, and horseracing, and gambling.”³⁷ Since Missouri represented the furthest west Americans could travel, Jackson County was the boundary of the frontier. Society was rustic there, and that presented a vastly different image of culture than many Mormons from the east were used to experiencing.³⁸

Besides social differences, Missourians failed to embrace the *Book of Mormon* as divinely inspired and rejected many other aspects of Mormonism as well. On September 17, 1831, the *Missouri Intelligencer* reported “that this infatuated people [Mormons] are again in motion. In their own cart phrase ‘they are going to inherit the promise of God to Abraham and his seed.’” The article provided opinions on the general character and intentions of Mormons. Its author declared “a great portion of its members are sincere and honest,” but that Mormons intended to “migrate to Jackson county . . . for which purpose they have purchased a sufficiency of land whereupon to locate the whole of the believers of Mormonism.” As a result, Missourians “should not rejoice much in the

³⁶ Bushman, *Joseph Smith: Rough Stone Rolling*, p. 162.

³⁷ Mortenson, *Among the Mormons*, p. 40.

³⁸ A vast historiography exists regarding to frontier Missouri. Some examples include Perry McCandless, *A History of Missouri: Volume II, 1820 to 1860*, (Columbia, MO: University of Missouri Press, 1972); Lew Larkin, *Vanguard of Empire: Missouri's Century of Expansion*, (St. Louis: State Publishing Company, 1961); Paul C. Nagel, *Missouri: A Bicentennial History*, (New York: W. W. Norton, 1977); and Walter Williams, editor, *A History of Northwest Missouri, Volume I*, (Chicago: The Lewis Publishing Company, 1915).

acquisition of so many deluded enthusiasts.”³⁹ Thus, during the earliest stages of Mormon migrations to Missouri, Missourians tended to be relatively compassionate toward the greater Mormon population while still rejecting Mormonism’s religious beliefs.

However, Missourians were far less accepting of Mormon leaders, who did not receive the same acceptance from Missourians as Mormon immigrants during the early settlement of Zion. Regardless of the extent or lack of knowledge about the Mormon faith, Missourians did blame Mormon leaders for the “delusion” of the Mormon faithful. That same *Intelligencer* article labeled Mormon leaders as “gross imposters” who “persist in their power to work miracles,” casting out devils, and healing the lame.⁴⁰ A newspaper account argued, “The prophet sent forth his general orders, which he pretended was revelation from God.” As a result, “They (the Mormons) have been made to believe it was a direct command from the Supreme Being.”⁴¹ Constant development of theological concepts that increasingly differed from other Protestant denominations during the decade almost certainly drew criticism from Missourians and Ohioans where the larger Mormon communities resided, although there is no way to tell how many Missourians were aware of specifics regarding Mormon revelations and theological developments. Because the *Evening and Morning Star* was the only newspaper in Jackson County at that time, Missourians most likely read the Mormon press and had at least a rudimentary understanding of the development of early Mormon theology.⁴²

³⁹ *Missouri Intelligencer*, September 17, 1831, 3-1.

⁴⁰ *Missouri Intelligencer*, September 17, 1831, 3-1.

⁴¹ Mortenson, *Among the Mormons*, p. 85.

⁴² Jennings, “Zion is Fled,” p. 61.

The development of Mormon religious practices that emphasized experiential religion or departures from mainstream Protestant groups caused the most outrage from Missourians. In February 1831, Smith received an “endowment of power” that provided information regarding the high priesthood or Melchizedek Priesthood, a position of power within the Church that allowed its holders to bestow endowments. In early June 1831 in a log schoolhouse in Ohio, Smith ordained the first members of the Melchizedek Priesthood before their trip to Missouri in mid-June.⁴³ John Whitmer, who wrote an early history of Church, recorded that the first ordination ceremony contributed to “trouble and unbelief” in the Ohio Mormon community, demonstrating tension between Church leaders in Ohio and those who left for Missouri. Before Smith travelled to Zion, “some [Mormons] apostatized, and became the enemies to the cause of God, and persecuted the saints.”⁴⁴ This priesthood combined with the *Book of Mormon*, revelations, and other aspects of experiential religion, miracles and laying on of hands differentiated the Mormon religion from Protestant denominations that Missourians embraced.

While Smith and a contingent of Church leaders visited Jackson County during the summer of 1831 in order to establish Zion, the headquarters of the Church remained in Kirtland, Ohio, until 1838. Smith returned to Kirtland in July 1831 after leaving a contingent of leadership in Missouri to establish and lead the Missouri branch of the Church. Because of his expertise as a printer, William W. Phelps established the printing press and oversaw the publication of the *Evening and Morning Star*. Besides Phelps,

⁴³ Bushman, *Joseph Smith: Rough Stone Rolling*, p. 157-160.

⁴⁴*The Book of John Whitmer Kept by Commandment*, (Salt Lake City: Utah Lighthouse Ministry), p. 5. This is commonly called *John Whitmer's History, 1831-1838* and was a private record kept by John Whitmer at the request of Joseph Smith, Jr.

Smith identified Edward Partridge as the leader who was to take charge in Missouri, a difficult burden that caused him a significant amount of stress. He wrote to his wife in Ohio, “I sometimes fear my station is above what I can perform to the acceptance of my Heavenly Father.”⁴⁵ Acting as Smith’s agent meant delegating Smith’s authority without necessarily having the same respect as his prophet enjoyed. Developing doctrine and internal fights amongst the faithful certainly contributed to his unease. In addition, Sidney Gilbert received the spiritual call to open a store in Independence that would provide for Mormon emigrant needs. As a merchant, Gilbert contributed goods and services to the Saints. This store was later attacked by Missourians in November 1833 when the Saints were expelled from Jackson County. Together, the three Missouri leaders provided for the political, intellectual, and financial needs of the Mormon Church as well as supplying spiritual guidance.

While Phelps, Partridge, and Gilbert remained in Missouri throughout the Mormon experience in Jackson County, other Mormon leaders journeyed between Kirtland and Independence amid the establishment of Zion in June 1831 and Mormon expulsion in November 1833. Oliver Cowdery and John Whitmer left Kirtland in November 1831 with the intention of transporting revelations Phelps needed in order to publish the *Book of Commandments*. Ezra Booth, who had converted to Mormonism in May 1830, traveled with Smith to Missouri during the June 1831 campaign and returned to Kirtland disillusioned enough to eventually leave the Church. He reported in a series of articles to the *Ohio Star* that Smith was unworthy of his title as God’s Prophet and head of the Mormon Church. He claimed that Smith’s role of “Prophet, Seer, Revealer,

⁴⁵ Howe, *Mormonism Unveiled*, p. 202.

and Translator,” allowed for too much power in the hands of one man.⁴⁶ For Booth, the establishment of the Missouri branch of the Church with leadership separate from Smith’s control of the Kirtland branch failed to diversify Mormon leadership enough. Perhaps Booth believed that Smith wanted too much oversight of the Missouri leadership instead of trusting them to do the work appointed to them. This would most certainly support the clash between Missouri and Ohio leadership that took place later in 1836 and 1837.

A number of Mormon faithful, including William McLellin, served as missionaries for the church with Missouri as their home base. McLellin, a school teacher in Paris, Illinois, converted to Mormonism during the summer of 1831 when two Mormon missionaries moved through Illinois on the way to “Zion which they said was in upper Missouri.” Eager to hear the views of these “quear beings,” McLellin rode furiously to get to the meeting where Harvey Whitlock and David Whitmer shared their religious views with the locals. The missionaries spent their time justifying the Book of Mormon as a divine document and expounded on the “Signs of the Times,” but what drew McLellin to convert to their doctrine was an explanation of “the Gospel the plainest I thot that I ever heard in my life.”⁴⁷ In astonishment, he asked the two men to preach the next day at another venue and listened to them there as well. Finding that a number of the Saints believed Jackson County to be the center of Zion, McLellin asked the missionaries to wait a week and he would join them. The men agreed and then preached to the gathering, during which McLellin’s conviction that these men preached the truth

⁴⁶ Howe, *Mormonism Unveiled*, p. 232.

⁴⁷ Jan Shipps and John W. Welch, editors, *The Journals of William E. McLellin*, (Provo, UT: BYU Studies at Brigham Young University, 1994), p. 29.

increased. He argued, “the glory of God seemed to encircle the man and the wisdom of God to be displayed in his discourse.” Immediately following this meeting, McLellin returned home, finished teaching the week of school, and settled his personal affairs. By Friday, July 30, 1831, McLellin had converted to the Mormon faith.⁴⁸

McLellin’s journals cover his life from conversion in July 1831 to June 7, 1836, when he fell ill and cut short his missionary work in order to heal. He recounted his experiences travelling between Missouri and Ohio and the rejection and acceptance he encountered along the way. He meticulously documented where he and his companions stayed and preached as well as the reception in each place. Responses varied tremendously depending on the time and place and the prior religious convictions of the citizens. McLellin recorded one example of a “Baptist preacher...who seemed to be very inquiring and asked many questions—he went away he said well satisfied that he had come to see and hear for himself.”⁴⁹ Members of other religious faiths converted to Mormonism as well. McLellin recounted meeting a Mr. Mun who “had also once been a Methodist preacher, but had become indifferent and cold in the things of God. Yet he listened with seeming joy to our relation.”⁵⁰ Frustrated by Mr. Mun and his wife’s acceptance of Mormonism, their Methodist circuit rider “would not engage in any friendly converse with us but treated us and all we said, sneeringly with contempt.”⁵¹ Another Methodist identified only as P “objected to the book of Mormon entirely because of its provintialisms [sic] or Yankeeisms as he called them and because the Lord of it was

⁴⁸ Shippo, *The Journals of William E. McLellin*, p. 30.

⁴⁹ Shippo, *The Journals of William E. McLellin*, p. 103.

⁵⁰ Shippo, *The Journals of William E. McLellin*, p. 103.

⁵¹ Shippo, *The Journals of William E. McLellin*, p. 103.

not a Grammarian or the language was not strictly grammatical.”⁵² Another minister, Elizjah Dodson, sought to discredit the missionaries by “warning them against us and the book of Mormon.” McLellin claimed he “seemed to be stirred up with fear that some of them [the meeting’s attendees] would embrace the things which we preached.” As it happened, Dodson did have reason to fear since McLellin recorded that “some of his first members professed to believe [Mormonism] with all their hearts.”⁵³ McLellin’s diaries include a multitude of times the Mormon missionaries faced resistance by religious leaders and laypersons. The sheer number of references to conversions and rejections in McLellin’s journal provide a clear picture that Mormonism infuriated some while uplifting and converting others.

As McLellin suffered hardships like illness, poverty, and rejection on his missions, he sought comfort in knowing he was fulfilling his purpose within the Mormon faith and his conviction that Mormonism provided a true picture of righteous living. He grew increasingly angry with those in Ohio and Missouri who persecuted the Saints “for no other reasons only their religion differs from the popular.” Frustrated with the treatment he and other Saints received, McLellin claimed in a letter written in Independence on August 4, 1832, that “Persecution raged so against them [Mormons] that the most of the believers either came to Ohio or to (Zion)” in order to escape persecution. McClellin blamed non-Mormon religious leaders and adherents for the torment Mormons underwent, but he also recognized the failure of the government in preventing it and political ideals for justifying the public’s actions against the new sect.

⁵² Shipp, *The Journals of William E. McLellin*, p. 103.

⁵³ Shipp, *The Journals of William E. McLellin*, p. 108.

He argued, “The american people boast of republicanism and often speak very contemptuously of the dark ages of persecution against the Savior and his apostles. But let a man reasonably expose the errors and false notions of God and touch a man’s traditions—and the same Devil or persecuting spirit is stirred up.” He lamented that the Mormons could find no recourse to their suffering because “the want of Authority does not stop them, amidst all the blaze of light they rise in mobs.”⁵⁴ McLellin’s recordings of clashes between Mormons and Missourians as early as mid-1832 indicate the tension between the two sides, even if newspapers failed to report the disputes until the more violent clashes in 1833.

While Booth lambasted Smith in Ohio and Mormon missionaries converted others to the faith, continued migrations of Mormons from Kirtland to Missouri boosted unease for Missourians in Jackson County. Missourians grew increasingly concerned with the number of Mormons in the area. By October 12, 1832, “about 400 or 500 Mormons, men, women and children,” had “collected at Zion.”⁵⁵ According to B. Pixley, a preacher and former missionary in Jackson County and present-day Kansas, the Mormons were “already suffering for the necessities of life, and . . . [from] squalid poverty [while] preparing for the reception of their expected Savoir.”⁵⁶ Smith and other Mormon leaders attempted but failed to provide for a planned and successful migration of converts to Missouri. Instead, the faithful rushed to Zion without attaining the needed materials to be

⁵⁴ Shipps, *The Journals of William E. McLellin*, p. 81.

⁵⁵ *Missouri Intelligencer*, April 13, 1833, 1-3.

⁵⁶ Reverends B. Pixley, Isaac McCoy, and Finis Ewing were all identified by Smith and other Mormon religious leadership as being three of the main leaders of persecution against the Mormons in Jackson County during the 1833 crisis. Articles in the *Evening and Morning Star* in 1834 and future Mormon publications document the persecution Pixley, McCoy, and Ewing purportedly led against the Church.

successful and created a crisis that threatened to ruin the establishment of Zion.⁵⁷

Nevertheless, Missourians' compassion for their religious neighbors had ended by this point, and a series of articles in the *Missouri Intelligencer* reported on the problems non-Mormons identified as connected to Mormon settlement in Jackson County.

In September and October 1832 editions of the *Evening and Morning Star*, articles and revelations encouraged Mormons to remain true to the faith in the face of increasing persecution. One article entitled "The Old and New Revelations" mixed biblical and contemporary instructions about behavior in the Mormon Zion. The article encouraged the Saints to remain faithful by saying, "Blow the trumpet in Zion, sanctify a fast, call a solemn assembly: gather the people, sanctify the congregation, assemble the elders....Spare thy people, O Lord, and give not *thy* heritage to reproach, that the heathen should rule over them."⁵⁸ Other pieces described the "signs of the times" that demonstrated the nearness of Christ's return, while another claimed, "we consider that the land of Missouri is the land where the saints of the living God are to be gathered together and sanctified for the second coming of the Lord Jesus."⁵⁹ The same article encouraged Mormons to follow the belief that "For Zion's sake I will not hold my peace, and for Jerusalem's sake I will not rest, until the righteousness thereof go forth as brightness, and the salvation thereof as a lamp that burneth." They should keep this

⁵⁷ Bushman, *Joseph Smith: Rough Stone Rolling*, p. 182. The plan to provide sufficiently for all the Mormon faithful depended in part on the United Firm or United Order, which was supposed to link a storehouse of money, property, and supplies (such as food) in Missouri with one in Kirtland. Together, these would allow for converts with limited financial means to have enough. This communal plan was expanded throughout the Missouri time period and existed at Far West by 1838 as well.

⁵⁸ *Evening and Morning Star*, September 1832, 5-2.

⁵⁹ *Evening and Morning Star*, October 1832, 5-1.

commandment so that “the Gentiles shall see thy righteousness.”⁶⁰ McLellin lamented, “amidst all the blaze of light they rise in mobs, black themselves, waylay houses and even break in and drag the servants of God from their beds, and families into the streets, and abuse and torture them, for no other reason only their religion differs from the popular.”⁶¹ While there is little evidence of any specific attacks on Mormons in Jackson County until the crisis erupted during the summer of 1833 and then again in November, the faithful continued to maintain that a spirit of persecution plagued them throughout the nation.

Each of these admonishments for the Mormon faithful represented a conflict between the Mormons and Missourians and resulted in destruction and sometimes violence between the two. By early spring 1833, attacks on Mormon farms and households indicated the pretended peace between the two groups would eventually erupt into open conflict. Suspicious of Mormon activities and the purchase of a significant portion of Jackson County land, Missourians drove Mormons from their homes, destroyed their printing press, and eventually exiled the group from Jackson County entirely.⁶² On July 2, 1833, Joseph Smith wrote to the Missouri Saints in encouragement. He said, “We are thankful to our Heavenly Father to hear of your welfare, as well as the prosperity of Zion.”⁶³ However, Smith’s assurance of safety was tenuous at best. The

⁶⁰ *Evening and Morning Star*, October 1832, 5-1.

⁶¹ Shipps, *The Journals of William E. McLellin*, p. 81.

⁶² Stephen C. LeSueur, *The 1838 Mormon War in Missouri*, p. 16. The community of exiled Mormons spent several months in Clay County (the location of Liberty, Missouri, and Smith’s jail term immediately following the conclusion of the 1838 conflict) before relocating to Caldwell County, which was designated specifically for Mormon settlement and security from non-Mormon neighbors.

⁶³ *Times and Seasons*, February 15, 1845.

Saints in Missouri understood more immediate threats because Missourians “saw their country filling up with emigrants, principally poor. They disliked their [Mormon’s] religion, and saw also, that if let alone, they [Mormons] would in short time become a majority, and, of course, rule the county.” Because the Missourians “became great exasperated,” they met in Independence on July 20, 1833, and appointed a committee that decided Mormons must “shut up all their workshops, their store, and their printing-office, and agree to leave the county.”⁶⁴ Besides depriving Mormons of these livelihoods and ordering them to vacate Jackson County, the Missourians also commanded “That no Mormons shall in future move and settle in this county.”⁶⁵ After a meeting in April 1833 that resulted in no agreement about how to handle their religiously motivated neighbors, Missourians made swift decisions on July 20. They voted to “demolish the printing-office, which they did immediately, and tarred and feathered the bishop and two or three others, and appointed the 23d to meet again and carry on the work of destruction.”⁶⁶ The Missouri contingent attacked the *Evening and Morning Star* office, scattered the printing plates, and ruined the capacity of the press to continue publishing the weekly newspaper or the Book of Commandments. While the Mormons sustained property damage during the July attacks, there were no fatalities and very little bodily harm to any of the Mormon settlers.

The brief respite of Mormons from bodily harm ended in late October and early November of 1833 after a brief cessation in hostilities between the two groups. The

⁶⁴ Corrill, *A Brief History of the Church*, p. 19.

⁶⁵ Mortenson, *Among the Mormons*, p. 80.

⁶⁶ Corrill, *A Brief History of the Church*, p. 19.

Mormons agreed to leave Jackson County, some as early as January 1834 and others later in the spring. However, the Mormons sought protection from the law in order to remain in their homes and in possession of their property. By “the last of October, a petition was drawn up and circulated in the church, praying the Governor for protection.”⁶⁷ In response, “some forty or fifty of the citizens of Jackson county Mo, assembled and demolished twelve of the dwelling houses” of Mormon families.⁶⁸ Further violence occurred including “depredations on the Mormons, by pulling down their houses, whipping the men, &c., until some time about the fourth of November, 1833, a conflict took place, in which three or four persons were killed, and others wounded.”⁶⁹ This violence occurred when the Mormons realized their plea for legal protection had failed and the Saints attempted to arm themselves in what they considered self-defense. This action likely contributed to a growing resentment by Missourians and resulted in the violence of early November.

John Corrill penned a letter to Oliver Cowdery in December 1833, describing the events of November 3 through November 6, and outlined the Mormon perspective of the conflict. The four days included a number of miscommunications between the Missourians and their Mormons neighbors and within the Mormon community itself. On October 31, Missourians marched on the Whitmer settlement and “unroofed and partly demolished ten houses; and also whipped and pounded several persons in a shocking manner, and diligently sought for others who fled for safety.” The next night, “another

⁶⁷ Corrill, *A Brief History of the Church*, p. 19.

⁶⁸ *Missouri Intelligencer*, November 16, 1833, 2-5.

⁶⁹ Corrill, *A Brief History of the Church*, p. 20.

party commenced stoning our houses in Independence, breaking down our doors and windows, and destroying furniture.” In addition, Gilbert’s store sustained damage including broken doors and goods strewn through the streets.⁷⁰ A number of the Missouri Saints gathered along the banks of the Blue River seeking protection from the mob, but a Missouri mob commandeered a ferry and attempted to attack the group on November 4. An accident caused the ferry to sink, successfully saving the lives of a the out-armed Mormons. In response to news of the ferry sinking and under the incorrect notion the Mormons sabotaged the ship, many Missourians believed the Mormons posed an imminent threat. Corrill reported that Missourians had “become desperate, and were busily employed in getting guns and ammunition, and preparing themselves for a general massacre of our people [Mormons] the next day.” This led to a confrontation between Mormons and the Missouri mob on November 5 and 6. Likely called by Adjutant Governor Lilburn Boggs and not the more sympathetic Governor Daniel Dunklin, the Missouri militia forced Mormons from the county with the help of the Missouri mob.⁷¹ Lack of communication among the Mormons meant that a group of Mormons from the western portion of Jackson County took up arms and marched toward Independence, unaware that Mormon leaders had already agreed to vacate Zion. By the end of the first week of November, a large portion Missouri Saints had fled or were in the process of leaving their Promised Land to go to Van Buren and Clay counties where they could regroup, petition the state for redress, and wait for guidance from their Prophet in Kirtland.

⁷⁰ *Evening and Morning Star*, January 1834, 4-2.

⁷¹ *Evening and Morning Star*, January 1834, 5-1, 5-2.

News about the attacks in Jackson County reached Smith and the church in Ohio within weeks of the attacks themselves. On November 25, 1833, Smith sadly recounted in his journal that “Brother[s] Orson Hyde and John Gould returned from Zion and brough[t] the melencholly intelegen[ce] of the riot in Zion with the inhabitants in pers[ec]uting the brethren.”⁷² Between the attack in Jackson County and hearing the news, Smith remained concerned with general signs of the coming apocalypse, the strength of the Church and its converts, and events in Kirtland. He had traveled to Buffalo in late October and returned to Kirtland the first week of November when violence erupted in Missouri. On both November 13 and 19, Smith recorded that “nothing of note transpired,” as the conflict in Missouri raged. On November 13, one of the Ohio faithful woke Smith and urged him to view a meteor shower, which both viewed as “lit[t]eral fulfillment of the word of God as recorded in the holy scriptures and a sure sign that the coming of Chirst is clost [close] at hand.”⁷³ Six days later, Smith lamented in his journal that Sidney Rigdon’s behavior sometimes deviated from what Smith wished but that “notwithstanding these things he [Rigdon] is a very great and good man” who would perform great acts for the Mormon faith. The brevity with which Smith addressed the subject of the Missouri violence in his journal most likely fails to accurately reflect the extent to which the situation frustrated him. More probable is that Smith and other Church leaders immediately met in order to create a strategy for regaining the land and supporting the western Saints. Sources indicate Smith remained faithful to what he

⁷² Scott H. Faulring, editor, *An American Prophet’s Record: The Diaries and Journals of Joseph Smith*, (Salt Lake City: Signature Books, 1989), 16.

⁷³ Faulring, *An American Prophet’s Record*, p. 14.

believed was God's vision for the Promised Land and had no intention or interest in admitting defeat there.

Smith lamented the loss of Jackson County but little evidence is found in doctrine or his journals to indicate that he considered the area truly out of reach as the Mormon Zion. Smith failed to reference the troubles in Zion in his journals again until January 16, 1834, when he wrote, "Oh my god have mercy on my Bretheren in Zion for Christ[']s] Sake."⁷⁴ Instead, Smith insisted that Jackson County remained the center place of the Mormon faith and that God would deliver the land back into the hands of the Mormon faithful. In addition, Smith did not receive new revelations indicating an alternative place for the Saints to gather to await Christ's return. Instead, he received the opposite—a revelation that ensured Zion's location in Independence. In December 1833, Smith first revealed, "Zion shall not be moved out of her place," and then indicated "And behold, there is none other place appointed than that which I have appointed; neither shall there be any other place appointed than that which I have appointed for the work of the gathering of my saints."⁷⁵ However, the same revelation allowed for the possibility that the permanency of Zion in Independence might be expanded to include other areas outside Jackson County. Smith indicated that in the future not all Saints would be able to gather in Zion. For that situation, Smith revealed, "until the day cometh when there is found no more room for them, and they shall be called stakes, for the curtains, or strength of Zion."⁷⁶ At the same time Smith upheld previous revelations that named

⁷⁴ Faulring, *An American Prophet's Record*, p. 19.

⁷⁵ *Doctrine and Covenants of the Church of the Latter Day Saints: Carefully Selected from the Revelations of God*, (Kirtland, OH: F. G. Williams & Co., 1835), Section XCVII, p. 235-236.

⁷⁶ *Doctrine and Covenants*, Section XCVII, p. 235-236.

Independence as Zion, he allowed for other areas to also play a vital role in the growth of the Mormon Church.

Smith as God's revelator and the revelatory nature of instructions regarding the establishment of Zion intensified the importance of this area to Mormonism and the tenets of the faith. At least seven revelations in 1830 and 1831 helped establish Jackson County, Missouri, as the city of Zion. Eleven revelations guided Smith's June 1831 excursion to Missouri. The sheer number of revelations in such a short amount of time demonstrates how significant Missouri was to early Mormonism. When Smith learned of the expulsion of Mormons from Jackson County in late 1833, his despair was evident in another series of revelations criticizing the behavior of Missouri Saints and the Missourians who persecuted them. In the December 1833 revelation, Smith revealed, "the Lord have suffered the affliction to come upon them [Mormons], wherewith they have been afflicted in consequence of their transgressions...there were jarrings, and contentions, and envyings, and strifes, and lustful and covetous desires among them; therefore by these things they polluted their inheritances." The revelation begins with this blame on those Saints who lived in Missouri. Only after establishing that the Missouri Saints "must be chastened, and tried," did the revelation provide comfort for the Missouri Saints and those who lived in Ohio and other areas.⁷⁷ The revelation stated, "Therefore let your hearts be comforted concerning Zion; for all flesh is in mine hands: be still, and know that that I am God." This revelation revealed the divine plan for the Saints and God's providence over them. It stated, "notwithstanding her children are scattered, they that remain and are pure in heart shall return and come to their

⁷⁷ *Doctrine and Covenants*, Section XCVII, p. 235.

inheritances; they and their children, with songs of everlasting joy; to build up the waste places of Zion. And all these things, that the prophets might be fulfilled.”⁷⁸ The reassurance that the loss of Zion fell into an ordained timeline of events surely provided comfort for the Missouri Saints and those who lamented what they believed would be a temporary loss of Zion.

As 1833 ended, the Mormon faithful suffered homelessness, martyrdom, and religious persecution. Despite similar theological beliefs to other Christian denominations and sects, Mormons faced a backlash that Baptists, Methodists, and Campbellites escaped during the antebellum period. Enraged Missourians drove the Saints out of Jackson County and into the neighboring counties of Clay and Cass where friendlier neighbors temporarily welcomed the refugees and provided respite for the persecuted religious group. Church leadership in Missouri and Ohio decried Missourians’ actions and sought divine guidance for how to recover and reclaim Zion. Smith received revelations insisting Independence would remain the center of the Mormon world as well as instructions for a military response to the troubles in Jackson County. In early 1834, Mormons sought redress for lost land, and Smith marched on Missouri with Zion’s Camp, armed Mormons from Ohio. Residents of Missouri reacted swiftly to the threat, although political leadership remained as neutral as possible during the crisis. Early 1834 brought little relief to Mormons who experienced lack of political support and loss of land and other economic resources while being accused of religious delusion and fanaticism. Convinced God would restore the faithful to the Missouri Zion

⁷⁸ *Doctrine and Covenants*, Section XCVII, p. 235-236.

in Independence, Mormons sought to regroup and embraced new directives to the Church revealed through their prophet.

Chapter 2—A Righteous Mob

On December 12, 1833, a handbill signed by Parley P. Pratt, Newel Knight, and John Corrill circulated through western Missouri in Clay and Jackson counties that described the mistreatment Mormons had suffered during the previous three months in Jackson County.¹ In it, the Mormon leaders accused “the Rev. Isaac McCoy, instead of acting the part of a peacemaker, (as he has stated,) of appearing at the head of a company, with a gun on his shoulder, ordering the Mormons to leave the country forthwith, and surrender what arms they had.”² With this pamphlet, McCoy became immortalized in Mormon tradition as a persecutor of the Mormon faith and members of the Church of Latter-Day Saints living in Jackson County and surrounding areas. Numerous articles in Missouri newspapers reported McCoy’s comments regarding the “fanatics” and remarking on the religious group’s misbehaviors and threats to public safety.

The Baptist missionary’s personal papers indicate a significantly different story. Instead of a religious leader bent on destroying the Mormon faith, McCoy’s journal indicates that he considered the religious group ignorant of Missouri laws rather than offensive because of their theological beliefs. In addition, he believed he demonstrated a considerable selflessness by attempting to curb the intention of Missouri mobs to harm the Mormon settlers. Yet, McCoy’s image as a persecutor of the Mormon Church continued, leaving many Mormons bitter towards Missourians and their religious leaders. Although tempers flared in newspapers across the state in late 1833 and early 1834 and Mormon publications later identified McCoy as one leader of the persecution, little

¹ John Corrill mentioned this handbill in a letter he wrote to the Ohio Church leadership in December 1833. The *Evening and Morning Star* published this letter in January 1834.

² *Missouri Republican*, January 30, 1834.

written evidence demonstrates that he paid the Mormons much mind. Nevertheless, the perceived treatment of the Mormon faithful by McCoy and others who were supposed to demonstrate Christian charity and kindness created anger and resentment that drove the Mormon faith away from the Protestant mainstream.

In part because McCoy has so little to say about the Mormon faith, historians have taken the missionary at his word and reject religion as an influence on his actions during the conflict in Jackson County. However, Fluhman's recent work argues that discounting a religious group as fake, then foreign, and finally false is the exact process through which both religious and non-religious antebellum Americans rejected Mormons and justified their persecution. McCoy's focus on his role as an Indian Agent and missionary understandably dominated his attention. His rejection of the Mormon faith coupled with his refusal to accept the Book of Mormon as a legitimate religious text suggests a religious motivation for McCoy's actions as leader of a Missouri mob. In addition, the Mormon tenet that Native Americans were descended from the Lamanites frustrated McCoy and complicated his work as a missionary to the Indians, even though he failed to take direct action against Mormon missionaries he felt had illegally invaded Indian territory. McCoy largely ignored Mormons where he worked and had little direct contact with the group when he visited Jackson County prior to the fall of 1833. Nevertheless, McCoy dismissing and ignoring the Mormon faith because it contradicted or challenged his own was inherently a religious action and provided partial motivation for his actions in November 1833.³

³ Fluhman, "*A Peculiar People*," pp. 9-20.

Although Isaac McCoy offered some commentary on the activities of Mormon leadership and lay members in Missouri newspapers, McCoy's primary focus was hardly on persecuting religious groups; instead, he was concerned with matters threatening the well-being of his own denomination and his life's work as a missionary to Native Americans. McCoy was appointed by the federal government as a Baptist missionary to Native Americans in Indiana and Illinois in 1817.⁴ Although Mormon theology called for the proselytizing and conversion of Indians as a precursor to a millennial Zion, McCoy rarely expressed concern over his Mormon competition. Instead, he directed his anger toward Methodist and Christian missionaries and beliefs as well as doctrinal splits within the Baptist denomination. Anti-mission movements and funding for missionaries instigated a significant amount of frustration for McCoy as evidenced throughout his reports to the Board of Foreign Missions and the U.S. Secretary of War.

Born in Pennsylvania in 1784, McCoy and his parents moved to Kentucky during his childhood, and he converted to the Baptist faith during his years there.⁵ He married Christiana Polk in 1803 and moved to Indiana soon after. His marriage provided him with kinship ties to future president James K. Polk and the political connections of that family in the newly acquired Northwest Territory. Shortly after his marriage, he became a licensed preacher and began ministering to Baptist congregations in the newly formed state. By 1817, he had gained his first assignment from local congregations to be a

⁴ Isaac McCoy and Walter Wyeth, *Early Ministry of Isaac McCoy: Recounting his Early Life, Conversion, Marriage, and Ministry in Indiana, 1784 to 1816*, (Springfield, MO: Particular Baptist Press, 2011).

⁵ Other sources that cover McCoy's life and ministry include Carol Spurlock Layman, *Isaac McCoy and the American Indians: A Novelized Memoir*, (self-published, 2002), and George A. Schultz, *An Indian Canaan: Isaac McCoy and the Vision of an Indian State*, (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1972).

missionary to a group of Miamis living near Terre Haute, Indiana. Almost a decade later, his missionary assignment took him north into Michigan where he continued to minister to Native Americans—Pottawatomies, Ottawas, and Shawnees. Sometime during his work with these groups in Indiana and frontier Michigan, McCoy grew so interested in missionizing Native American groups that his attention turned exclusively to the Indian population. He wrote to a critic of Native Americans in 1820, “I would rather be a missionary to the Indians than fill the President’s chair, or sit on the throne of Alexander, emperour [sic] of Russia. Something has turned my attention towards the Indians, & every feeling of my soul is enlisted in their cause.”⁶ From his appointment as a missionary to the Indians until his death, McCoy’s primary concern focused on civilizing Native American tribes by Christianizing them and improving their spiritual and temporal conditions.

During the 1820s, McCoy became one of the biggest proponents of providing Native Americans an area to claim as their own and fought tirelessly for the improvement of their lives. McCoy was one of the first successful Indian missionaries in the lands west of Missouri. Church historian Emory Lyons claimed, “the relation of the government of the United States toward the Indian has been that of careless indifference. When Isaac McCoy came on the scene the Government had no constructive policy for caring for the red man.”⁷ McCoy consistently criticized the federal government’s changing Indian policies and insisted that many of the men who negotiated with the

⁶ Isaac McCoy (manuscripts and letters), 1820, *The Isaac McCoy Papers*, Vol. II, Southern Baptist Historical Library and Archives, Nashville.

⁷ Emory J. Lyons, “Isaac McCoy: His Plan of and Work for Indian Colonization,” (Kansas State Printing Plant, 1945), p. 8.

Indians “have no conscience.”⁸ His continual efforts to secure land to the west of the United States’ borders for that safe haven finally succeeded and culminated with a series of Indian removals to modern-day Kansas and Oklahoma throughout the 1830s.

Because McCoy wanted a separate area for Native Americans and frontier whites, he petitioned the government for a place far removed from the corrupting influence of whites—west of Missouri and east of Mexican lands past the Rocky Mountains. Despite hints of ethno-centrism that were common at that time, McCoy genuinely believed Native Americans were continually corrupted by their interaction with white men. He argued in his *History of the Baptist Indian Missions* that prolonged contact with whites had caused the Indians to be taciturn and warlike rather than the cheerful, peaceful peoples they had been before European settlement in the western hemisphere. He claimed, “If Indians are a warlike people, they are made so by extraneous causes, and not hereditarily. But the Indians are *not a warlike people*.”⁹ Likewise, McCoy argued, “The Indian, instead of being a taciturn, dull being, inclined only to hunting and war, as he has been represented, is, when not oppressed with suffering, cheerful and conversable.”¹⁰ Summarizing McCoy’s “Remarks on the Practicability of Indian Reform, Embracing Their Colonization,” Berkhofer argues that “not their character but their condition determined the extinction of all Indians. The bad example of frontier whites, insecurity of land tenure, and lack of other civilized Indians accounted for the ill-success of previous

⁸ Isaac McCoy (journal), July 25, 1838, The Isaac McCoy Papers, Southern Baptist Historical Library and Archives, Nashville.

⁹ Isaac McCoy, *History of Baptist Indian Missions: Embracing Remarks on the Former and Present Condition of the Aboriginal Tribes; Their Settlement Within the Indian Territory, and Their Future Prospects*, (Washington: W. M. Morrison, 1840), p. 21.

¹⁰ McCoy, *History of Baptist Indian Missions*, p. 24.

missionary efforts.”¹¹ For McCoy, white Americans caused the downfall of the Indian peoples, despite some characteristics that the missionary defined as character flaws in the Native American population. McCoy argued that white men exploited Native Americans for their own gain by stealing land, selling liquor, and destroying resources. This included frontier whites in Jackson County. McCoy, then, most likely had little in common with the Missouri mob that organized against the Mormons in late 1833 because of his priority as an Indian missionary.¹² In fact, most of McCoy’s closest associates shared his passion to convert Native Americans to what they considered true Christian faith. Both non-religious Missourians and members of “other” religious denominations were far from McCoy’s allies in his life’s work.

As a Baptist missionary during the early 1830s, McCoy faced a number of other challenges as the conflict in Independence developed. One of the earliest Baptist religious workers in the state, McCoy was part of a community that helped establish the Baptist denomination as a thriving faith in Missouri. The Baptists were present in Missouri in the years leading up to statehood in 1821, but they lacked a state convention until 1834, the year after the Mormon expulsion from Jackson County.¹³ Instead, early Missouri Baptists relied on local associations (usually made up of several churches within a county or two) to oversee the actions of ministers and congregations. The early Baptist presence in Missouri was strongest along the eastern border of Missouri opposite

¹¹ Robert F. Berkhofer, preface to *History of Baptist Indian Missions*, p. xi.

¹² While there is no specific evidence of this, many contemporary Mormon leaders viewed McCoy as allied with (at least in sentiment) with other Christian ministers who persecuted the Saints. Articles in the *Evening and Morning Star* as well as accounts written in the late 1830s by Parley P. Pratt and John Corrill identify McCoy as one of the leaders of the mob.

¹³ R. S. Douglas, *History of the Missouri Baptists: Published by the Executive Board of the Missouri Baptist General Association*, (Kansas City: Western Baptist Publishing Company, 1934), p. vii.

southern Illinois and Kentucky with the birth of the Bethel Association in 1816 and in the St. Louis area with the Missouri Association in 1817.¹⁴ As the population of the state spread westward along the Missouri River, so did the growth of associations in Howard and Cooper counties in central Missouri and the western part of the state in Clay County by 1824.¹⁵ The last association to be formed prior to a state convention was the Blue River Association which took ten churches that had been dismissed from the Fishing River Association in Clay County and combined them with churches as far away as Blackwater in Cooper County.¹⁶ The Blue River Association was comprised of churches along the Blue River in Jackson and Clay counties where the Mormons sought safety during the first week of November 1833 when violence erupted against the Saints. This split reflected the larger problems of Baptists in the state of Missouri over religious issues that troubled McCoy during the early 1830s.¹⁷

Although a number of Baptist congregations disagreed over the issue of slavery prior to an official split in the denomination in 1844, the main denominational problem Baptists faced during the early years in Missouri was the anti-mission movement that drove a wedge between those churches who supported missions and those who did not. This movement impacted denominations in other areas of the nation as well, and contributed to a splintering of religion in antebellum America. The argument over

¹⁴ Douglas, *History of the Missouri Baptists*, pp. 45, 49.

¹⁵ Douglas, *History of the Missouri Baptists*, pp. 62-66, 77, 78.

¹⁶ Douglas, *History of the Missouri Baptists*, pp. 97, 102, 103.

¹⁷ Ironically, Isaac McCoy is absent from the entire *History of Missouri Baptists*. McCoy's work as a Baptist missionary was integral to the work in the western United States for mission minded Baptists during the 1830s as evidence by a number of work detailing McCoy's work. However, Douglas' history only lists Baptist who were elders in or ministers of Baptist churches associated with associations during the 1830s.

missions emerged and centered on disagreements regarding the necessity of foreign mission movements for furthering God's work. Anti-mission churches argued that foreign missions were not the responsibility of individual churches, and they often refused to send monetary support to the governing bodies overseeing specific denominations.

For McCoy, the anti-mission movement threatened his life's purpose as a missionary to Native Americans. Some anti-mission congregations resisted foreign missions so vehemently that they disputed the need for missionaries to the Indians, considering them foreigners despite their presence just over the border from the United States and their indigenous connection to the land. McCoy and his fellow missionaries, Jonathan Lykins and Jotham Meeker, depended on contributions from Baptist congregations to support their work. McCoy never kept monetary compensation for his work with the Indians; instead, he contributed his earnings to a common missionary fund in compliance with missionary guidelines. The anti-mission movement in the Baptist faith threatened McCoy's position as much as any other crisis, and it reached its peak at almost exactly the same time as the conflict between Mormons and Missourians in Jackson County erupted into military conflict.

In 1829, McCoy and his family lived in Fayette, Missouri, in northeast Cooper County before receiving permission to minister to Native Americans in Indian Territory. According to his *History of the Baptist Indian Missions*, McCoy feared that Baptist anti-mission sentiment would prohibit the Baptist General Board from providing a commission for his work.¹⁸ Edward Roustio, editor of McCoy's papers, describes his

¹⁸ McCoy, *History of Baptist Indian Missions*, p. 371.

struggles by writing, “McCoy had to fight constantly against the anti-missionary ideas that emanated from zealous, but ignorant, Baptist ministers. Those narrow-visioned, though conscientious, preachers opposed as unscriptural all Sunday schools, mission societies, and every organization for the extension of the Kingdom of God.”¹⁹ Roustio explains this conflict by clarifying that many anti-mission Baptists were strict Calvinists believing that God had only ordained certain people to be saved. As a result, missionary efforts to heathen nations and peoples wasted time, energy, and resources that were better used to further God’s work in the United States. When he finally received authorization to work in Indian Territory in 1831, McCoy rejoiced but was quick to criticize members of his denomination who had tried to hamper his missionary zeal. He wrote, “The most favourable, and inviting openings for missions now present themselves in this [Indian] Territory, and yet our Board seem afraid to even tell the public of [them] . . . I am grieved with our denomination, and am truly ashamed of them.”²⁰

One of the associations closest to McCoy’s residence in Independence and the mission field in Indian Territory was the Fishing River Association that encompassed Clay, Jackson, and Ray counties on the western border of the state. In 1833, this association split into the anti-mission association that retained the name Fishing River and the Blue River Association (formally organized in 1834), an association that supported mission efforts and subsequently grew in membership. Ministers in both associations became involved with the Mormon crisis in Jackson County, with several of them signing their names to written documents that were intended to ease tensions and

¹⁹ Edward R. Roustio, *Early Indian Missions as Reflected in the Unpublished Manuscripts of Isaac McCoy*, (Springfield, Missouri: Particular Baptist Press, 2000), pp. 86-93.

²⁰ McCoy (journal), August, 31, 1831, SBHLA.

protect the rights of Jackson County residents. Robert Fristoe was one of the ministers who had been in western Missouri at least as early as 1824 when the Fishing River Association was formed.²¹ When the association split in 1833, he was a minister of a church that left the anti-mission association and helped found the Blue River Association. Thus, he was a supporter of missions in the Baptist denomination.²² Although there is little evidence of direct contact between Fristoe and McCoy, their common belief in mission oriented Baptist theology as well as their mutual work with other community leaders to reconcile Jackson County residents and their Mormon neighbors indicates at least minimal contact between the two religious leaders.²³

Besides interacting with both mission oriented and anti-mission Baptist ministers and laypeople, McCoy was also in contact with a number of Methodist, Presbyterian, and Campbellite ministers, missionaries, and religious people in Missouri and Indian Territory. McCoy made references to successful partnerships between himself and several Methodist missionaries in reaching members of Indian tribes and commented on the similarities between Methodist and Baptist beliefs. He claimed the Methodist missionaries had gone through the proper governmental channels in order to gain permission to minister in Indian Territory and respected their methods in reaching the Native Americans. In addition, Methodists tended towards Arminian beliefs that McCoy's mission oriented approach would have appreciated, although McCoy remained

²¹ Robert Fristoe was the son of a Tennessee Baptist minister, Robert Fristoe, Sr., and had two brothers who were active in Baptist leadership in Jackson County, Missouri, during the 1820s and 1830s. Robert, Jr., was the oldest brother and Richard and Thomas Fristoe were his younger brothers. Richard Fristoe died on November 21, 1845, in Jackson County, Missouri.

²² Douglas, *History of the Missouri Baptists*, pp. 77, 97.

²³ Fristoe's name appeared on the Secret Constitution and another document dated in early 1834 regarding Mormon presence in Jackson County.

a Calvinist by remaining a member of the Baptist denomination until his death in 1846.²⁴ Conversely, McCoy criticized some Presbyterian ministers whose focus in working with Native Americans differed from his views. Presbyterian emphasis on predestination would have reminded McCoy far too much of his constant fight with the strict Calvinist oriented anti-mission Baptists. As a result, McCoy's choice to associate with Methodist missionaries more than those of the Presbyterian faith was reflected in frequent journal references.²⁵

Although McCoy approved of Methodist theology and criticized Presbyterianism but was still willing to work with them, the Baptist missionary intensely disliked the relatively new denomination—Disciples of Christ, more commonly called Campbellites. In fact, a common distaste for Alexander Campbell's religious teachings provided McCoy a commonality with Methodist and Presbyterian missionaries in Indian Territory and throughout Missouri. McCoy vehemently disapproved of Campbell's new theological views regarding the meaning of baptism and the Covenant of Grace. McCoy's correspondence hints at the importance of refuting Campbell's ideas. A letter from his brother, James McCoy, who was a Baptist minister in Indiana, informed Isaac that, "Cambelism [sic] has not gained any since you were here [in Indiana], its advocates are Discountenanced generally and they have a very poor appearance. [They] do little else than censure and ridicule others, and I hope their folly will be generally known and

²⁴ McCoy's description of his conversion experience during his teenage years provides the best example of his adherence to Calvinism. He recounts his conviction of sinfulness and then the descent of grace after which he recognized the perfection of biblical accounts of salvation that had only created fear for his soul prior to his conversion. Because of his firm belief in the importance of missionary work, he identified with Methodist Arminianism later in life, but there is no evidence in his writings or personal papers that he rejected Calvinism.

²⁵ McCoy (journal), August 1831-July 1832, SBHLA.

cease.”²⁶ Isaac referred to Campbell’s restoration movement as a “perversion of the gospel” and worked constantly to refute Campbell’s religious claims in his journal and communications with other religious leaders.²⁷ More importantly, McCoy consistently worked to keep Baptist beliefs at the forefront in his missionary work and concealing what he considered Campbell’s flawed belief system from the Native American population.

It was into this religious and social context that the Mormons arrived in the world in which Isaac McCoy lived and worked. As McCoy received permission from the federal government to work with Native American groups in Indian Territory and moved to Jackson County from central Missouri, Joseph Smith and other Mormon leadership consecrated the Temple Lot and established Independence as the Mormon Zion in 1831. According to McCoy’s personal papers, the early Mormon presence in Missouri failed to make much of an impression on the Baptist missionary who spent much of his time in 1831 and early 1832 out of Missouri and Indian Territory in order to build support for his mission and fulfill his job as a Federal Indian Agent.²⁸ Although the federal government appointed McCoy as an Indian Agent in 1831, he spent that first few months after his appointment in the nation’s capital attempting to convince the United States government to provide an area to the west of Missouri for “exclusive occupation by all Indians then east of the Mississippi river.”²⁹ McCoy’s focus on his mission to the Indians and his goal

²⁶ McCoy (letter from James McCoy to Isaac McCoy), August, 25, 1831, SBHLA.

²⁷ McCoy (journal), SBHLA.

²⁸ Jennings, “Isaac McCoy and the Mormons,” pp. 62-70.

²⁹ Lyons, “Isaac McCoy,” p. 21.

of establishing a permanent Indian settlement remained his priority. Until outright fighting occurred, McCoy concentrated on his calling.

Although McCoy's absence kept him out of direct contact with Missouri Mormons, his daughter provided him and his wife with information about the religious group. On July 29, 1831, Isaac McCoy's daughter, Delilah Lykins, wrote a letter from the Shawnee Agency in modern-day Kansas to her mother in Independence. Lykins, the wife of a Baptist missionary to the Shawnee Indians who worked closely with Isaac McCoy, described her frustration concerning "the Mormonites" who she claimed were "about to take over the country."³⁰ Earlier that summer, she had met Joseph Smith and dismissed him much the same way others had who argued he could not possibly be the author of the Book of Mormon. Lykins described Smith as a "very illiterate man" who "had hardly common sense." Lykins argued Smith could "neither read nor write," thereby discrediting the Book of Mormon as a valid religious text. Since she believed Mormonism a false religion created at the hands of a religious imposter, it horrified her to learn that a neighboring family would convert to Mormonism. In disgust, she claimed the Book of Mormon was "not even a good imitation of the Bible" let alone an entirely new book of scripture.³¹ As such, the Mormon faith was no faith at all to her.

Much as the Book of Mormon irritated Lykins, the Mormon scripture also angered Missourians towards their Mormon neighbors. When Mormon migration began in 1831, most Missourians accepted the Mormon laity regardless of their religious beliefs. This changed, however, as more and more Mormons moved to Jackson County and

³⁰ Delilah Lykins (letter), July 29, 1831, The Isaac McCoy Papers, 1808-1874, Southern Baptist Historical Library and Archives, Nashville, p. 1.

³¹ Lykins (letter), July 29, 1831, SBHLA, p. 2.

differences grew more pronounced. On June 23, 1832, the *Missouri Intelligencer* published an article remarking on the absurdity of Mormon theology, based on the Book of Mormon, which many non-Mormon Americans derisively called the Golden Bible. In the *Missouri Intelligencer*, Missourians claimed, “These Mormons will have an advantage not enjoyed by other denominations; no one will think it necessary to controvert their creed as found and laid down in their Book of Inspiration.”³² The Mormons believed in a “strange doctrine,” and attempted to delude others to believe in unbiblical scriptures, such as the Book of Mormon and the books of Abraham and Moses. One article called the Book of Mormon a “collection of dull, stupid and foolishly improbable stories, which no person, unless under the influence of powerfully excited feelings can mistake for truth and inspiration.”³³ The *Evening and Morning Star*, the Mormon church’s newspaper, responded by stating, “As the public seem somewhat astonished, that we, among all the light of this century, should have ‘sacred records which have slept for ages’ to publish, it is our duty to say...There are too many books mentioned and missing in the Bible to query about more records.”³⁴ However, new scriptures comprised the bare minimum of what Missouri Gentiles viewed as threats to their society.

During the antebellum period in Missouri, religious controversies often overlapped with political, economic, and social disagreements. Not surprisingly,

³² *Missouri Intelligencer*, June 23, 1832, 3-1.

³³ *Missouri Intelligencer*, June 23, 1832, 3-1.

³⁴ *Missouri Intelligencer*, June 23, 1832, 3-1.

Missourians' anger towards Mormons extended to social and political concerns as well.³⁵ After McCoy's efforts to secure a permanent Indian settlement west of Missouri succeeded, Indian Territory bounded the western Missouri border. As a result, some Missourians lived in constant fear of Indian attacks on Missouri towns. In his memoirs, Alexander Majors recounted one example of the ever-present fear of Indian attacks. He wrote, "Mrs. Ferrins, a settler who lived on the outskirts of the little settlement of pioneers, was alone, except for a baby a year old...she imagined she saw Indians. She dropped her bucket, ran to the cabin, took the child in her arms, and fled with all her might."³⁶ Continued threats from Native American tribes on Missouri's western frontier because of Mormon identification with Indians as their partners in Zion building perpetuated Missourians' anger towards Mormons. Jennings argues, "It can only be surmised that the motive behind this [decision for Mormons to remove from Jackson County to the north or east] was fear—fear that the Mormons might establish contact with the Indian tribes and encourage them to attack the Jackson Countians [sic] in order to secure revenge."³⁷ In addition to the literal gathering of Mormons to Missouri, Mormon theology included belief in "the restoration of the Ten Tribes" as a precondition for the fulfillment of Zion.³⁸ The Ten Tribes refers to the Lost Tribes of Israel who were

³⁵ McCandless, *A History of Missouri*, pp. 105-107. See also James H. Jenkins, "Casus Belli: Ten Factors That Contributed to the Outbreak of the 1838 "Mormon War" in Missouri," (Independence, MO: J.H. Jenkins, 1999).

³⁶ Alexander Majors, *Seventy Years on the Frontier: Alexander Majors' Memoirs of a Lifetime on the Border*, (Denver: Rand, McNally & Company, 1893), p. 20.

³⁷ Jennings, "Zion is Fled," p. 190. Jennings references a letter from Independence dated November 7, 1833, and later quoted in the *Evening and Morning Star* in December 1833 for this assertion.

³⁸ Smith, *Pearl of Great Price* and James H. Talmadge, *The Articles of Faith: A Series of Lectures on the Principal Doctrines of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints*, (Salt Lake City: The Deseret News, 1919), v. 10.

scattered during the Assyrian takeover of the Hebrew Tribes several centuries before the birth of Christ.³⁹ Mormon theology identified Native Americans as the descendents of the Ten Tribes and expected an alliance between Native Americans and Mormon believers in order to hasten the formation of Zion. Historian Marvin Hill claims Parley P. Pratt, an apostle of considerable importance in the Mormon Church, believed the creation of Zion would result from the work of Native Americans and that Mormons would benefit from their industrious allies.⁴⁰ Mormon religious beliefs that Native American tribes were descended from the Lamanites necessitated Mormon missionaries to proselytize the Indians. In her letter to her mother, Delilah Lykins reported that Mormons were “preaching and baptizing through the country” as they tried to build the New Jerusalem in western Missouri and the Indian Territory.⁴¹ Because Lykins’ husband and father were Baptist missionaries to the Delaware and Shawnee Indians, Mormon infiltration of the Baptist mission field probably displeased her as much as the Book of Mormon did. Surprisingly though, McCoy never directly discussed Mormon missionaries in the areas where he ministered. If he did encounter them, he probably discounted them as a threat to his work, except for his criticism that they failed to hold the proper credentials from the federal government.

Both the Mormons and Missourians identified reasons tensions between the two groups bubbled over into physical fighting in Jackson County. Mormons argued Missourians “began to be highly displeased. They saw their country filling up with

³⁹ Givens, *By the Hand of Mormon*.

⁴⁰ Hill, *Quest for Refuge*, p. xix.

⁴¹ Lykins (letter), July 29, 1831, SBHLA, p. 2.

emigrants, principally poor. They disliked their [Mormon's] religion, and saw also, that if let alone they would in short time become a majority, and of course, rule the county."⁴² One Mormon woman who heard of the troubles in Jackson County was Emily Austin, a young woman who converted and married a Mormon man in 1833 in New York. She recounted, "On several occasions we received intelligence that the inhabitants of Jackson county were displeased at the idea of so many coming into the county." Unlike Corrill and other Mormon leadership, Austin cited economic reasons that drove Missourians' frustration. She claimed, "They [Missourians] said the range for their cattle would be taken by the Mormon cattle, and the 'shuck' was devoured by the Mormon pigs; and they boldly declared they would not suffer this so to be."⁴³ In order to combat the potential economic loss, Austin argued, "to maintain their [Missourians' economic] integrity, complaint was made to the state authorities and the governor issued a command that every Mormon should leave the county at once. But the Saints refused to obey the order."⁴⁴ Mormons refused to leave on the principle that they had every Constitutional right to be where they were, and tensions continued to rise between the two groups.

Besides the loss of land for their cattle and hogs to graze and feed, a perceived threat to slavery certainly contributed to tension between Missourians and their Mormon neighbors. In July 1833, the *Evening and Morning Star* published an article entitled "Free People of Color" that addressed the role of race in the Mormon Church. The article begins by stating, "To prevent any misunderstanding among the churches abroad,

⁴² Corrill, *Brief History of the Church*, p. 19.

⁴³ Emily M. Austin, *Mormonism or Life Among the Mormons: Including an Experience of Fourteen Years of Mormon Life*, (Madison, WI: M. J. Cantwell, 1882), p. 68.

⁴⁴ Austin, *Mormonism or Life Among the Mormons*, p. 69.

respecting free people of color, who may think of coming to the western boundaries of Missouri, as members of the Church, we quote the following clauses from the laws of Missouri.” The article then quotes Sections 4 and 5 from the Missouri state constitution, both of which prohibit free blacks from entering the state legally and prohibit Missouri residents from bringing or encouraging free blacks to settle within the state’s borders. After these quotes, the article urges Saints to “dictate great care” and “shun every appearance of evil” with regard to slaves, who were property, and free blacks.⁴⁵ While Phelps’ words appear innocuous and fully supportive of slavery and the restriction of free blacks from the state, Missourians reacted with an anger that stunned Jackson County Mormons and lasted decades after Mormon expulsion from the state.⁴⁶ After publication, Phelps defended his position by insisting that the article addressed the religious belief that slaves and free blacks should not be allowed church membership, but the damage was already done. While Mormons were “northern people, who, on account of their declining to own slaves and their denunciation of the system of slavery, were termed ‘free soilers,’” most Jackson County residents were recent emigrants from Kentucky and Tennessee, both slave states and southern in nature.⁴⁷ The county’s population largely supported President Andrew Jackson and his Democratic party, both of which were supportive of perpetuating the system of slavery. Fearing an uprising like Nat Turner’s Rebellion in 1831, Missouri leaders argued Mormons “would corrupt our blacks and

⁴⁵ *Evening and Morning Star*, July 1833, 4-2.

⁴⁶ Phelps acted as editor of the Mormon newspaper, so the text of the article has been attributed to him.

⁴⁷ Hemen Smith and Joseph Smith, *History of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints, 1836-1844*, Vol II, (Lamoni, IA: Board of Publication of the Reorganized Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints, 1897), p. 351.

integrated them to bloodshed.”⁴⁸ No matter Phelps’ intention, Missourians saw the publication of “Free People of Color” as a threat by outsiders to the very fabric of their culture.

Missouri residents met on July 20, 1833, and adopted what Mormons often refer to as the Secret Constitution, a document written much as a manifesto. Political, economic, and religious leaders joined together to declare, “We, the undersigned, citizens of Jackson County, believing that an important crisis is at hand, as regards our civil society, in consequence a pretended religious sect of people that have settled, and are still settling in our County, styling themselves ‘Mormons.’” The men viewed the Mormons as dangerous and an evil and intended to “peaceably if we can, forcibly if we must,” remove the religious group from the county. These same men argued that the laws of the state had failed them “against the evils which are now inflicted upon us, and seem to be increasing, by the said religious sect, deem it expedient, and of the highest importance.” Like the Mormons, they called upon the law to preserve their rights to live in Jackson County without the trouble of their Mormon neighbors. They vowed to “form ourselves into a company for the better and easier accomplishment of our purpose — a purpose which we deem it almost superfluous to say, is justified as well by the law of nature, as by the law of self-preservation.”⁴⁹ The list of Missouri men included judges, deputies, a postmaster, and R.W. Cummins, who was identified as an Indian Agent, all positions of power who would have been considered defenders of natural law or morally acceptable

⁴⁸ *Evening and Morning Star*, December 1833, 2-1.

⁴⁹ *Evening and Morning Star*, December 1833, 2-1.

behavior based on rational thought that were widely accepted in American society.⁵⁰

While McCoy's name did not appear on the Secret Constitution, he was acquainted with Cummins and corresponded with him in several letters during his years as a missionary to the Indians in the late 1820s and early 1830s. As a result, McCoy almost certainly knew of the potential conflict in Jackson County before violence erupted in late 1833.

Mormons worked quickly to satisfy the anger of Missourians by publishing a circular just days after the offending article in the *Evening and Morning Star* enraged Jackson County residents. However, it failed to bring peace to the county. The combination of Mormon beliefs and social and political disagreements as well as the continued migration of Mormons to their promised Zion eventually proved too much for non-Mormons, and Jackson County residents decided to take action. By August 10, 1833, non-Mormon residents demanded "that no Mormon shall in [the] future move and settle in this county" and "that those now here shall . . . within a reasonable time . . . remove out of the county."⁵¹ Missouri historian McCandless identifies this edict as the "Secret Constitution," which was supported by several hundred Missourians.⁵² As the numbers of Mormon emigrants increased rapidly in the summer of 1833, non-Mormons in Jackson County despaired that recent Mormon emigrants resulted in "a gradual falling off in the character" of Mormon residents that resulted in the "dregs of their composition" taking over the area.⁵³ This was a result of rapid migration from the east which meant that many Mormons traveled to Missouri before securing proper provisions. Dependence

⁵⁰ Holifield, *Theology in America*, p. 94.

⁵¹ *Missouri Intelligencer*, August 10, 1833, 2-2.

⁵² McCandless, *A History of Missouri*, p. 106.

⁵³ *Missouri Intelligencer*, August 10, 1833, 2-2.

of Mormons on community networks rather than on their own labor and efforts was a primary reason for hasty departures from the East. The relative poverty of many Mormon emigrants compared to the more established Missourians helped cause some of the Missourians' consternation as did an emphasis on community by Mormons as compared to an emphasis on individual work to which most Missourians prescribed.

By August 1833, Missourians grew weary of the sheer number of Mormon residents in Jackson County coupled with increasingly problematic religious claims. Reports that Mormons could "converse with God and his Angels, and possess and exercise the gift of Divination and of unknown tongues" resulted in calls for forced removal of the Saints.⁵⁴ Salmon Sherwood, a Mormon dissenter, accused Smith of declaring that "he had the power that Jesus Christ had when he was here in the flesh; that he had the discerning of spirits, so as to discover who were worthy, even to the lowest as well as to the highest."⁵⁵ Despite theological differences among Baptists, Methodists, Presbyterians, and Campbellites, none of these groups viewed the others as a direct threat to society. The unusual religious beliefs and claims of Mormons coupled with perceived attacks on the non-Mormon way of life created a system of tension in which Mormons and their Gentile neighbors interacted during 1833. When Mormon leaders in Missouri postponed their response to the Missourians' demands to stop migration into the county by stating that they first needed to consult with Mormon leadership in Ohio (where Joseph Smith resided at the time), Missourians lost patience and attacked the *Evening and Morning Star* printing office on July 20, 1833, destroying the press and the sect's

⁵⁴ *Missouri Intelligencer*, August 10, 1833, 2-2.

⁵⁵ *Missouri Intelligencer*, April 20, 1833, 1-3.

capacity to publish revelations in Jackson County.⁵⁶ The paper remained dormant for months until the Church's press in Ohio took over publishing it in September and then closed it permanently January 1834.⁵⁷ The July attack destroyed Mormon property and resulted in little physical harm to the Saints themselves, but continued tensions eventually led to the expulsion of Mormons from the county by November 1833.

Reports about the disturbances in Jackson County brought swift reaction from Missourians from as close as the surroundings counties of Clay and Lafayette to other areas in the state like St. Louis, Columbia, and Potosi in south central Missouri. As early as November 30, 1833, less than a month after Mormon expulsion from Jackson County, a Missourian simply identified as "W." provided the *Missouri Intelligencer* with an editorial concerning the "fire of persecution [that] has rolled a siros [sic] flame through the calm retreat of our western forest."⁵⁸ W. learned of the disturbance in Jackson County "with feelings of deepest regret" because he feared the non-Mormons had acted out of "disorder, cruelty, and wantonness" rather than justified reasons for anti-Mormon sentiment. He argued that he knew "but little about the Mormonites and care[d] less," but "no occurrence, however aggravated, can justify the first movement of a mob." In his opinion, the Mormons possessed the "right of worshipping" and the "light that burns on the altar of liberty" as much as any other American citizen. W. asked of readers, "Are the Mormons fanatics? If so, let the consequences of their fanaticism fall upon their own heads. If they break the bounds of the law, the arm of civil power will restrain them." In

⁵⁶ *Missouri Intelligencer*, April 20, 1833, 1-3.

⁵⁷ The *Evening and Morning Star* was replaced by the *Messenger and Advocate* that began publication in October 1834 in Kirtland, Ohio.

⁵⁸ *Missouri Intelligencer*, November 30, 1833, 1-1.

addition, W. believed that the “hand of the Eternal [God]” would ultimately punish the sins of those he called “poor and deluded Mormons,” and the Missourians need not interfere. Thus, W. identified the “indiscriminate attack upon Mormon property and persons altogether unjustifiable, and highly reprehensive.”⁵⁹

Other Missourians responded to the problem in Jackson County and agreed with W.’s assessment that Mormons should enjoy the same rights and privileges of American citizenship as any other religious denomination or group. The editors of the *St. Louis Advocate* stated, “we must be allowed the expression of our deepest disapprobation of this matter.”⁶⁰ They continued by declaring, “No man or set of men are superior to the laws; and none so low that the virtue of their protection will not reach and shield from the wrongs of oppression. . . the Mormons (however offensive they may be to their neighbors, have rights of worship, and rights of residence, which cannot be violated with impunity under the laws.”⁶¹ The *Missouri Intelligencer*’s editors added, “We think the proceedings against the Mormons constitute the greatest outrage of the kind committed since the foundation of our government.”⁶² On June 21, 1834, they included an additional statement about the situation by asserting, “We regard the Mormons, as a set of deluded and deceived fanatics, yet they have the rights and privileges, and whilst they exercise these, we cannot desire to see them disturbed . . . we wish them success, in resisting every lawless innovation of their rights.”⁶³ Criticism of the behavior of non-

⁵⁹ *Missouri Intelligencer*, November 30, 1833, 1-1.

⁶⁰ *Missouri Intelligencer*, November 30, 1833, 1-1.

⁶¹ *Missouri Intelligencer*, November 30, 1833, 1-1.

⁶² *Missouri Intelligencer*, February 1, 1834, 2-5.

⁶³ *Missouri Intelligencer*, June 21, 1834, 3-1.

Mormon Missourians centered on Missourians acting outside the law rather than support of the Mormon religious viewpoint.

Shortly after the events unfolded in Jackson County and Missourians in Boone County and St. Louis chastised Missourians for their treatment of Mormons, McCoy's involvement in the conflict became known. McCoy's standing as a minister created a sensation among Mormons and Missourians alike who criticized McCoy for openly persecuting people with differing religious beliefs. Parley P. Pratt was particularly disgusted and wrote, "Some of the clergy, who actually marched with rifle in hand, at the head of parties of the mob, and afterwards published an excuse, in order to justify the mob in such awful wickedness;—(among other clergymen, who were personally engaged in such conduct, I would identify the Rev. Isaac McCoy, a noted missionary to the Indians."⁶⁴ In the early 1840s, Mormons sought redress through the national government for their losses in Missouri. Two men identified McCoy as a member of the mob in Jackson County. Lemuel Herrick testified, "In a few days after this there was about sixty armed men with the reverend Mr Isaac McCoy missionary to the indians at their head came into my neighborhood and run off most our men, shooting at some, and whipping others, and swearing that they would kill every Mormon if they was not out of County in three days."⁶⁵ Lewis Abbott remembered, "I was attacked by a company of 40 mobbers well armed under the command of Rev Isaac McCoy an Indian Missionary they threaten my life with much violence but left me on condition I would leave the County."⁶⁶

⁶⁴ John P. Greene, *Facts Relative to the Expulsion of the Mormons or Latter-day Saints, from the State of Missouri, Under the "Exterminating Order"*, (R.P. Brooks: Cincinnati, OH, 1839), p. 18.

⁶⁵ Clark V. Johnson, ed., *Mormon Redress Petitions: Documents of the 1833–1838 Missouri Conflict*, (Provo, Utah: Religious Studies Center, Brigham Young University, 1992), p. 437.

⁶⁶ Johnson, *Mormon Redress Petitions*, p. 411.

Finally, Oren Rockwell recounted on February 3, 1840, that “Issac McCoy Missionary of the Indians—Cummings indian agent—Lovejoy and many others that I do not now reecollect on the 31st day of October” committed a number of violent acts. Rockwell claimed McCoy and others approached David Whitmer’s house and “drew his wife out of the house by the hair of the head and proceeded to throw down the house they then went to other houses throwing them down untill they had demolished ten dwelling houses amidst the shrieks and screams of women and children.” In addition, Rockwell claimed Cummins and McCoy took part in a “mob that was painted as indians and assuming that character to themselves began abusing and insulting the women.”⁶⁷ Each time McCoy was mentioned in a redress petition, Mormons expressed outrage that a religious leader played an integral role in persecuting the Saints.

His actions drew reaction from as far away as Potosi, a lead mining town in south central Missouri. McCoy’s daughter, Sarah (McCoy) Givens, wrote a letter to her mother expressing significant relief at her parents’ safety following the armed conflict in early November 1833. The letter, dated November 28, 1833, reported that, “The people of Jackson County are very much abused here. It is a constant source of vexation to me as Mr. Givens is gone and there is no one to take my part.”⁶⁸ Before the letter from her parents, Givens and others in the area had only received information about the Jackson County “difficulties” from a letter written by a Mormon in the *Missouri Republican* that claimed over 40 persons had perished in the conflict. Givens complained to her mother that “several gentlemen...take a delight in in [sic] abusing Jackson Co. whenever they

⁶⁷ Johnson, *Mormon Redress Petitions*, p. 532.

⁶⁸ Sarah McCoy Givens (letter), The Isaac McCoy Papers, 1808-1874, Reel 8, 395, Southern Baptist Historical Library and Archives, Nashville.

come into my presence. I took the liberty this morning of requesting them to say nothing about it in my presence as my parents lived there.” Their actions miffed her so much that she claimed, “If they do not quit I shall quit eating at the table with them at least until Mr. Givens gets home.” Givens signed off from her three-page letter by offering these words on the Jackson County situation, “I sincerely hope your disturbances will cease, and that the public will learn to do justice. I wish the true state would be published to make the people hold their tongues if nothing more.”⁶⁹ For Givens, the 1833 conflict in Jackson County brought criticism from neighbors that inflamed her feelings of injustice. Although she lived far away from the epicenter, her father’s involvement made Missourians’ disapproval a source of personal frustration.

As if in response to Givens’ request that the “true state” of events would become known, McCoy recorded his experiences in both journal form and in a “brief history” in November and December 1833, much of which was published in the state’s leading newspapers during the months of December. McCoy wrote in his journal on November 29, 1833, that he had “been requested by sundry gentlemen to write a brief history of the Mormon difficulties for the benefit of the public. This request has been made in such a way that I have been induced to comply, and have written 12 pages.”⁷⁰ In “Isaac McCoy and the Mormons,” Jennings argues that the source of the request for McCoy’s summary “was probably Lieutenant Governor Lilburn W. Boggs.”⁷¹ At the time, Boggs also lived in Independence and wrote an account of the troubles in Jackson County. Both his and

⁶⁹ Givens (letter), Reel 8, 395, SBHLA.

⁷⁰ McCoy (journal), November 29, 1833, SBHLA.

⁷¹ Jennings, “Isaac McCoy and the Mormons,” p. 72.

McCoy's reports provided Missouri newspapers a Missourian's viewpoint of the conflict and were widely circulated in the *Missouri Republican* and the *Missouri Intelligencer*. Both men enjoyed considerable influence in the county, and McCoy's perspective as a religious leader would have balanced the political lens of Boggs. Both men argued the primary source of frustration for Missourians regarding Mormons was not religion but because the Mormons were "ignorant of laws," although McCoy's religious beliefs surely impacted his actions and thoughts to some extent.⁷²

According to McCoy, his primary goal during the difficulties between Missourians and their Mormon neighbors centered on stopping bloodshed and calming tensions in Jackson County. In an entry dated Friday, November 1 (1833), McCoy wrote in his journal, "I must begin to say something upon the sickening subject of Mormon difficulties."⁷³ Prior to the violent outbreak between the Mormons and Missourians, McCoy had been in contact with a number of Mormons, even employing some as temporary workers on his farm in Independence. McCoy argued, "Hitherto [November 4, 1833] I have not meddled in the matter in any way—Now I feel it to be my duty to endeavor to make peace."⁷⁴ He insisted that his actions were consistent with the intention to keep peace and protect the well-being of all people, even though he felt both sides resisted his attempts to calm the actors on each side. On November 4, McCoy claimed he "went the same evening and Mormons in two places to lay down their arms and

⁷² *Missouri Intelligencer*, December 14, 1833.

⁷³ McCoy (journal), November 1, 1833, SBHLA. It is doubtful that many of the entries made in McCoy's journals during the difficulties were made on the day they were dated. However, there is no way to determine the actual dates, so the entries must be viewed by the dates provided in the journal.

⁷⁴ McCoy (journal), November 4, 1833, SBHLA.

peaceable, &c. But my advice was without effect.”⁷⁵ Two days later he met with a similar fate. He saw “there was need of some to regulate the conduct of the rash. Two guns were at one time cocked for the purpose of shooting a Mormon, when I rushed forward and prevented. I had to use similar efforts afterwards to prevent one from being beaten with a stick, and another with a gun.”⁷⁶ On November 7, McCoy expressed frustration with Missourians by writing, “On our side was no order—or arrangements—every one was doing what seemed right in his own eyes.”⁷⁷ That chaos inspired McCoy to use his considerable influence to stop the immediate conflict and to prevent future problems as well.

Within a few days of the conflict’s beginning, McCoy had a plan to end the difficulties and attempted to see it implemented. That plan was twofold, including the surrender of all Mormon arms to Missouri leadership and removal of all Mormons from Jackson County. McCoy began his work on November 8 when he was “busy all day devising and writing arrangements by which we hoped to lessen afflictions of the Mormons, and at the same time prevent them from rallying at an unexpected moment and butchering us all.”⁷⁸ McCoy feared a Mormon attack for at least three days beginning on November 6 when he considered fleeing with his family from Independence “across the Missouri or Kanza [rivers]” but decided to stay for fear of losing his personal papers and supplies for missionizing the Indians.

⁷⁵ *Missouri Intelligencer*, December 14, 1833.

⁷⁶ McCoy (journal), November 6, 1833, SBHLA.

⁷⁷ McCoy (journal), November 7, 1833, SBHLA.

⁷⁸ McCoy (journal), November 8, 1833, SBHLA.

McCoy also feared tensions would escalate and result in more deaths.⁷⁹ On November 7, he “met a company [of] men coming up to patrol the settlements [in Jackson County], to see that the Mormons should not be molested in their preparations to get off, to guard them when necessary, and to show them that they certainly could not be allowed to remain here any longer.”⁸⁰ Although McCoy labeled the Mormons “shiftless and ignorant” and claimed they provoked Jackson County residents by declaring their property would not sustain damage because of Divine protection, he gave thanks that “providence . . . terminated the alarming doings” without additional human casualties and clashes between the two groups.⁸¹ He argued Missourians would be better served by allowing Mormons to be prosecuted by the law rather than persecuted by a Missouri mob.⁸²

Although McCoy claimed he was trying to create “public tranquility” in Jackson County, Mormon reaction to his and other Missourians hardly demonstrated appreciation or even an understanding of what he claimed to have wanted.⁸³ Instead, many reports by Missouri Mormons painted McCoy and other ministers as active persecutors of the Saints, and that perception continued long after the Latter-Day Saints left Missouri. Brigham H. Roberts, editor of *The History of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints* in the early twentieth century, claimed, “the Reverend Isaac McCoy and other preachers of the gospel (!) were seen leading bands of marauders from place to place; and

⁷⁹ McCoy (journal), November 6, 1833, SBHLA.

⁸⁰ McCoy (journal), November 7, 1833, SBHLA.

⁸¹ *Missouri Intelligencer*, December 21, 1833, 2-4.

⁸² McCoy (journal), November 6, 1833, SBHLA.

⁸³ McCoy (journal), November 8, 1833, SBHLA.

were the main inspirers of cowardly assaults on the defenseless.”⁸⁴ In the 1839 pamphlet “History of the Late Persecution Inflicted by the State of Missouri upon the Mormons,” Parley P. Pratt declared that McCoy and “other pretended preachers of the gospel took part in the persecution; calling the Mormons the common enemy of mankind, and exulting in their afflictions.”⁸⁵ In the January 1840 edition of *Times and Seasons*, an article identified “the Rev Isaac McCoy” as one of the two Baptist ministers that headed companies of Missourians who persecuted the Saints in Jackson County.⁸⁶ This article vilified the alleged actions of McCoy and the unnamed Baptist preacher arguing that “they went forth through the different settlements of the saints, threatening them with death, and destruction if they were not off immediately.”⁸⁷ Articles in the *Evening and Morning Star* also identified McCoy and other ministers as participants in the Jackson County conflict.⁸⁸ If the Mormon accounts accurately represent Mormon understanding of McCoy’s actions, the Baptist failed to convince the persecuted group that he had any interest in protecting their welfare.

McCoy’s service as a religious leader created a significant amount of contempt towards him by Latter-Day Saints in Jackson County and future Mormons. In the May 1834 edition of the *Evening and Morning Star*, an article addressed his outrageous behavior stating that after the Mormons had surrendered their arms “every mean and

⁸⁴ Brigham H. Roberts, *The Missouri Persecutions*, (Salt Lake City: George Q. Cannon & Sons, Co. Publishers, 1900), p. 107.

⁸⁵ Parley P. Pratt, *Autobiography of Parley P. Pratt (1807-1857)*, (New York, 1874), p. 108.

⁸⁶ “A History of Persecution,” *Times and Seasons*, (Nauvoo, Ill., January 1840).

⁸⁷ *Missouri Intelligencer*, December 21, 1833, 2-4.

⁸⁸ *Evening and Morning Star*, (Kirtland, Ohio: March 1834), 2-2.

cowardly villain, who had previously stood back, rushed out to gratify his revenge; and among those was the *Rev. Isaac M'Coy!* Yes, the *Rev. Isaac M'Coy*, a missionary; a baptist Missionary! sent to convert the Indians!”⁸⁹ The article also disparaged McCoy as a “*true* follower of John Calvin” who “grasped *his* gun and marched at the head of a company of ruffains [sic], and ordered the women and children to flee for their lives.”⁹⁰ Despite McCoy’s claim that he was “unarmed, as I ever remained to be throughout these difficulties,” Mormon accounts in the *Evening and Morning Star* and later publications concerning Mormon persecutions in Missouri stated otherwise.⁹¹ Pratt later supported early reports that McCoy carried a gun and affirmed, “At the head of one of these parties [the Missouri mobs] appeared the Rev. Isaac McCoy (a noted Baptist missionary to the Indians) with a gun upon his shoulder, ordering the Mormons to leave immediately, and surrender everything in the shape of arms.”⁹² McCoy’s religious background as a missionary helped foster vehement disapproval of his actions during the Jackson County conflict by leaders of the Mormon Church.

In his article, Jennings argues, “McCoy, as a loyal son of his own church, would have been disturbed by Mormon doctrine and dogma. Inevitably, his attitude towards the Mormons would have been shaped by his own religious background.”⁹³ Although there is little direct evidence of religious disapproval of Mormon beliefs, McCoy’s actions and writings do provide some insight on a few possible points of contention. In his 1839

⁸⁹ *Evening and Morning Star*, (Kirtland, Ohio: May 1834), 8-1.

⁹⁰ *Missouri Intelligencer*, December 21, 1833, 2-4.

⁹¹ McCoy (journal), November 4, 1833, SBHLA.

⁹² Pratt, *History of the Late Persecution*, p. 20.

⁹³ Jennings, “Isaac McCoy and the Mormons,” p. 79.

“History of Baptist Indian Missions,” Isaac McCoy recorded over 700 typeset pages regarding his and other missionary efforts to missionize the native peoples of the United States. In the introductory remarks, McCoy provided a discourse entitled, “Introductory Remarks on the origin of the Indian Tribes,” which outlined his thoughts and perceptions regarding the ancestry of Native Americans and their arrival in North America. McCoy wrote, “the most common opinion in regard to their [Indian] descent, and one which our minds seem predisposed to adopt, is, that they are the descendants of Israel.”⁹⁴ Early Mormon beliefs adhered to his concept and, in fact, structured an entire set of beliefs based on the common ancestry of Native American tribes and Jewish peoples. The Book of Mormon, published in 1830, recorded the history of Lehi and his descendants who migrated to modern-day America and were ancestors to the Lamanites (Native Americans). Although common perception that Native Americans descended from ancient Israelites supported Mormon claims, McCoy discounted that explanation of Indian ancestry by arguing, “such proof as is necessary to a belief of the fact assumed is still wanting.”⁹⁵ He continued his claim by analyzing several categories many used to support the connection between the two groups. McCoy argued there was little evidence of common language or customs, and, thus no solid proof of the link between the two.⁹⁶

Besides Mormon belief in Native Americans as Lamanites, McCoy, as a registered Federal Indian Agent, grew frustrated at misunderstandings by Mormons regarding federal laws about Native American missions and land. He claimed, “The

⁹⁴ McCoy, *History of Baptist Indian Missions*, p. 2.

⁹⁵ McCoy, *History of Baptist Indian Missions*, p. 2.

⁹⁶ McCoy, *History of Baptist Indian Missions*, pp. 2-17.

Mormons, as I suppose from information, came here so ignorant of laws, regulating intercourse with the Indian tribes, aid them in adopting habits of civilization, and attach them to their party.”⁹⁷ Unfortunately for the Mormons, few Native Americans joined their religious sect. McCoy remarked that Mormons worked hard for few rewards by writing, “[Mormons were] frustrated in this design, they located in this county, and procured land, to a small amount only for so great a number of person.”⁹⁸ Although Mormon accounts of their interest in Missouri vary significantly from McCoy’s view, he believed Mormons had that intention from the beginning. McCoy, who had worked through the established procedure of the federal government and the national Baptist missionary board to gain access to Indian Territory, must have been annoyed that others felt they could bypass the system. Although this was a misunderstanding of Mormon intention on McCoy’s part, his views helped drive his actions in the Jackson County conflict.

Throughout McCoy’s journal and other writings, the Baptist missionary continually stated his opinions regarding the importance of keeping religion separate from politics. His primary focus always consisted of his interest in missionizing the Indians, but lack of monetary support drove McCoy to take a job as a Federal Indian Agent in order to continue his work in Indian Territory. Despite his connection to the government, McCoy differentiated between his religious and political duties. He argued, “[the] government never has allowed, and never can allow support to one whose business

⁹⁷ *Missouri Intelligencer*, December 14, 1833.

⁹⁸ *Missouri Intelligencer*, December 14, 1833.

among the Indians is exclusively of a religious nature.”⁹⁹ As a result, much of McCoy’s work consisted of starting schools and finding suitable teachers for each one. When the *Missouri Intelligencer* reported in August 1833 that the Mormon influx threatened the political stability of the county, McCoy took notice. He shared other Missourians’ fears “that the day is not far distant, when the civil government of the county will be in their hands. When the Sheriff, the Justices, and the County Judges will be Mormons, or persons willing to court their favor from motives of interest or ambition.”¹⁰⁰ McCoy argued, “Hitherto, the Mormons had been quiet upon the subject of politics, but it was easily perceived that as matters were progressing, at no distant day they would carry with them an influence which would control all county business.”¹⁰¹ For such a staunch proponent of the separation of Church and State, the Mormon threat to politics proved to be too much.

As a Baptist, McCoy’s belief system differed from Mormon beliefs and almost certainly colored his opinion of the religious group. His obvious distaste for followers of Alexander Campbell spilled over into his daughter Delilah’s views as well. In a letter dated September 1, 1833, Lykins wrote to her parents, “I also think— (as Mr. Lykins says) that Alex. Campbel [sic] ought to claim them [Mormons] as his grand children for they preach very much like him.”¹⁰² Emphasis on Campbell’s teachings as a restoration of Christianity was similar to Joseph Smith’s insistence that the Mormon faith completed a restoration of true Christianity and had been corrupted since Jesus’ time on Earth. In

⁹⁹ McCoy (draft of a letter from McCoy to Dr. Bolles), February 21, 1831, SBHLA.

¹⁰⁰ *Missouri Intelligencer*, August 10, 1833, 2-2.

¹⁰¹ *Missouri Intelligencer*, December 12, 1833.

¹⁰² Lykins (letter to Isaac and Christiana McCoy), September 6, 1831, SBHLA.

addition, experiential elements of religion and continued revelations were fundamental to the Mormon faith and against nineteenth century Baptist beliefs. Antebellum Baptists believed God had completely revealed all necessary elements of the Christian faith during the time of Jesus and the Apostles finished that work during the Pentecost. As a result, further revelations were unnecessary and contrary to tenets of true Christianity, which the Baptists believed they were. The Book of Mormon and Smith's revelations that were published in the Independence based *Evening and Morning Star* would have excited McCoy's beliefs and given him theological opposition to the Mormon faithful in Jackson County and the surrounding areas.

Although McCoy's papers indicate he never viewed himself as a persecutor of the Mormons during the crisis in 1833, his role as a Baptist missionary meant the Mormons did. His refusal to name religion as a motivating factor for his role in the Missouri mob has allowed historians to excuse religion as a primary source of a decidedly religious conflict with leaders of Protestant denominations helping expel a religious group they believed to be fake. Fluhman's reexamination of sincere religious beliefs that provided a basis for dismissal by mainstream religious groups allows for a new lens through which to view McCoy's actions and to take his own religious convictions seriously. Although McCoy's words indicated he believed Mormons to present an economic and political threat to Jackson County, attempts to missionize Native Americans and the Book of Mormon almost certainly increased resentment toward the Mormons. For the persecuted Saints who viewed themselves as a chosen people, persecution from leaders of rival religious groups appeared especially egregious. Not surprisingly, new revelations in the

years following the Jackson County conflict indicated a widening divide between the Mormon Church and other Protestant denominations.

Chapter 3—Redeeming Zion

On February 17, 1834, Joseph Smith called together several members of the Ohio Church and organized a high council. At this meeting, Smith and eleven other men established a method of leadership that would oversee “settling important difficulties which might arise in the church.”¹ Two major problems plagued the Church of Christ—reclaiming confiscated property in Jackson County, Missouri, and the stability of the Church in Kirtland, Ohio. In Missouri, hundreds of Saints had lost property and sought refuge in Clay and Cass counties. Debt and pressure to build up the temporal power of the Church with the hope of increasing its theological impact plagued Smith and other leadership in Ohio.² Consequently, the interim between the violent outbreaks in Jackson County in 1833 and the Mormon War in 1838 proved vital in the push to redeem Zion and fulfill God’s promises for a just society. New revelations provided instructions for regaining property in Jackson County, and when that failed, Smith received directives to buy land that bordered Jackson County instead. As the anticipated redemption of Zion stalled, the Ohio Church prepared for the onset of an endowment that Smith believed must occur before Zion could be reclaimed. By the time Caldwell County was organized as a space for the displaced Saints in late 1836, Missouri Church leaders had expanded methods that would provide care for Church members of modest financial means in western Missouri. As pressure mounted against the Church in Kirtland, religious leaders, including Joseph Smith and Sidney Rigdon, prepared to remove to Missouri, partially out

¹ *Doctrine and Covenants*, Section V, p. 96.

² Joseph Smith (journal), Ronald K. Esplin, et al, editors, *The Joseph Smith Papers: Journals, Volume 1*, (Salt Lake City: The Church Historian’s Press, 2008), p. lii.

of fear for their safety and partly to participate in the gathering of the Saints.³ Continued persecution and thwarted plans resulted in modified designs for the embattled Saints.

The years following expulsion from Jackson County offered little relief for the Church of Christ as they sought to build up their kingdom and further God's plan.

On December 7, 1833, the *Missouri Intelligencer* reported, "the Mormons have all left their late places of residence in Jackson county, and are now scattered throughout the country. Many of them have taken refuge in the adjoining counties of Lafayette and Clay, where they have been hospitably received."⁴ Mormon proximity to the chosen place for Zion perpetuated belief in the surety of God's revelation through their prophet and leader that Jackson County remained the location of Zion. In addition, the Saints continued to insist on the importance of the creation of Zion as integral to the Mormon faith. The religious importance of the area coupled with the loss of property remained at the center of the hope that the displaced Saints could regain control of western Missouri, if not Independence itself, within the year. An eventual return to Jackson County gained credence in the Mormon belief system thanks to a revelation in which Smith revealed, "Zion shall not be moved out of her place, notwithstanding her children are scattered, they that remain and are pure in heart shall return and come to their inheritances."⁵ Received by Smith on December 16 and 17, 1833, in Kirtland, Ohio, this revelation further revealed "there is none other place appointed than that which I have appointed, neither shall there be any other place appointed than that which I have appointed for the

³ Esplin, *The Joseph Smith Papers*, p. lii-lv.

⁴ *Missouri Intelligencer*, December 7, 1833, 3-2.

⁵ *Doctrine and Covenants*, Section XCVII, p. 235.

work of the gathering of my Saints, until the day cometh when there is no more room for them.”⁶ Smith’s words demonstrate a surety of God’s plan that no Missouri mob could threaten. Independence had been ordained for the Mormons as a righteous land; recent expulsion would only serve as a temporary setback that would shortly be remedied by a powerful God who rewarded the faithful.

Unfortunately for those in the Missouri branch of the Church of Christ, Smith and other Ohio leadership questioned the faithfulness of their western brethren. In the same revelation insisting Zion’s location in Independence was secure, the Missouri Saints were lambasted for breaking a covenant between them and God, that they had “polluted their inheritances” and were to blame for losing control of Jackson County.⁷ This revelation came the day after the Ohio Church received a letter from W. W. Phelps from Clay County, Missouri. In it, he declared, “I know it was right that we should be driven out of the land of Zion, that the rebellious might be sent away. But brethren, if the Lord will, I should like to know what the honest in heart shall do?”⁸ The loss of Zion seemed exceptionally traumatizing for the Saints because of the accusation that the covenant between God and the Mormon faithful had been broken. Many in Ohio believed the Missouri Mormons had broken a covenant with God and they lost Jackson County because of it, but Phelps’ letter indicates that there were many who had remained faithful and suffered along with the rebellious. As the displaced fought to return to Jackson County, criticism from distant leadership must have rankled the persecuted Saints.

⁶ *Doctrine and Covenants*, Section XCVII, p. 236.

⁷ *Doctrine and Covenants*, Section XCVII, p. 237.

⁸ *Evening and Morning Star*, January 1834, 8-1, 8-2.

During the final month of 1834, Smith limited his criticism of the Missouri Saints to that single revelation securing Jackson County as the Mormon's promised land. The revelation also highlighted that true repentance by the Mormon faithful would result in restoration to the land and comfort to the Saints themselves. Those who suffered at the hands of the mob were surely heartened by the words, "they that have been scattered shall be gathered. And all they who have mourned shall be comforted. And all they who have given their lives for my name shall be crowned. Therefore, let your hearts be comforted concerning Zion; for all flesh is in mine hands; be still and know that I am God."⁹ However, divinely inspired comfort failed to provide a practical solution for the problems that plagued Mormons in both Missouri and in Ohio who both struggled to determine a further course of action. As a result, almost three months passed between the expulsion of the Saints from Jackson County until Smith called the high council in Kirtland and revealed a plan to redeem Zion.

While waiting for directives from Ohio leadership, the Missouri Mormon contingent remained as close to Jackson County as possible following the conflict in November 1833, and the Saints attempted to understand the reasoning behind the Missouri mob's actions. The first edition of the *Evening and Morning Star* following the expulsion lambasted Missourians who "profess the religion of Jesus Christ, and to be followers of the meek and lowly Lamb."¹⁰ By accusing religiously inspired Missourians of attacking fellow members of their Christian faith, the article indicates that Mormons considered themselves religiously similar to their Missouri neighbors, even though their

⁹ *Doctrine and Covenants*, Section XCVII, p. 241.

¹⁰ *Evening and Morning Star*, January 1834, 1-1.

Missouri neighbors vehemently disagreed. The article stated, “the principal charge brought or preferred against our society by the *mob*, was in consequence of the religion that they [Missourians] professed.”¹¹ In addition, the author asserted, “the religion of our friends was all, in short, that excited the hatred of the people of Jackson county, or the more part of them.”¹² Although several other causes factored into the persecution of the Saints, members of the Missouri Church insisted they were attacked because of their religion. In a letter to President Andrew Jackson dated April 10, 1834, leaders in the Missouri Church insisted, “That this is a religious persecution is notorious throughout our country.”¹³ While accounts in Missouri based newspapers referred to Mormons as outsiders with an invalid religion, and thus a non-religious group, the Mormons insisted religion constituted the crux of disagreement between the two parties.¹⁴

The proximity of Mormons in Clay, Cass, and Lafayette counties and their insistence that they be restored to their lost lands resulted in continued conflict in Jackson County in December 1833 and January 1834. The Saints’ refusal to accept expulsion almost certainly contributed to the antagonism Missourians continued to display towards their displaced neighbors. The December 1833 revelation maintaining Zion’s rightful place in Jackson County did little to dispel tension since Mormon converts continued to migrate westward. If Missourians believed armed conflict would discourage future settlers, they were thwarted by divine instructions to the Mormon faithful. Smith

¹¹ *Evening and Morning Star*, January 1834, 1-2.

¹² *Evening and Morning Star*, January 1834, 2-2.

¹³ John Whitmer, *John Whitmer’s History, 1831-1839*, (Salt Lake City: Utah Lighthouse Ministry), p. 12.

¹⁴ This example demonstrates the significance of Fluhman’s argument that religion played a role for both sides in the conflict, even when Missourians insisted the war was not about religion.

revealed that God would disclose “other places which I will appoint unto them” which “shall be called stakes . . . or the strength of Zion” only when western Missouri could hold no more Mormon families.¹⁵ Consequently, Mormon migration to Missouri continued even after the intense persecution of 1833, and Mormons clung fervently to the belief that Jackson County remained the future site of Zion. Jennings argues that harassment of the Saints strengthened the Mormon community’s resolve in the months following the Jackson County conflict because of millennial connections between Zionism and persecution.¹⁶

The Missouri Mormon community’s acceptance of persecution as part of God’s plan to redeem Zion was not unexpected. The Mormons suffered severe maltreatment, including beatings, tarring and feathering, burned homes, and confiscation of property. Regardless of whether Missourians believed Mormon behavior justified the harsh conduct or not, Saints suffered greatly at the hands of Missouri residents. Persecution is inherent in millennialism, and Zion building is millennial; consequently, persecution is important to the story of Mormons in Jackson County and the establishment of a divinely ordained Zion. In the March 1834 edition of *The Evening and the Morning Star*, a front-page article entitled “The Outrage in Jackson County, Missouri” analyzed persecution and what it should mean to the faithful. The article stated, “From the beginning of the world, since the plan of redemption was communicated from heaven to man, the righteous have, almost unceasingly been persecuted.”¹⁷ In fact, the true nature of the

¹⁵ *Doctrine and Covenants*, Section XCVII, p. 236.

¹⁶ Jennings, “Zion is Fled,” p. iv.

¹⁷ *Evening and Morning Star*, March 1834, 1-1.

Mormon religion brought more persecution for the religious group because persecution came from the “prince of darkness,” the true enemy of God.¹⁸ Persecution against Mormons was neither rare nor unexpected in Missouri; instead, it was expected and accepted in varying degrees in late 1833 and early 1834. When it became clear to Mormon leadership that continued persecution hindered God’s plan, new revelations provided divine instructions that widened the theological gap between Mormons and mainstream Protestant groups.

By the middle of January 1834, Smith wrote two entries in his diary addressing his concerns about Jackson County. On January 16, he pled, “Oh my God have mercy on my Bretheren in Zion for Christ Sake Amen.”¹⁹ The next entry, dated January 11, was likely transferred to the journal days after the recorded events took place and recounted the concerns of Smith and other Ohio leadership, including Frederick Williams, Newel Whitney, John Johnson, Oliver Cowdery, and Orson Hyde. These men asked that “the Lord would deliver Zion” and “protect our printing press from the hands of evil men.”²⁰ Since a viable press provided the most efficient means of disseminating information to Mormon converts, the move of the *Evening and Morning Star* to Kirtland after the Missouri press was destroyed proved paramount in maintaining communication with the Mormon faithful. Finally, the group asked for protection for the Missouri Saints from hunger and cold and for a peaceful resolution in Independence so God would “gather his

¹⁸ *Evening and Morning Star*, March 1834, 1-1.

¹⁹ Smith (journal), *The Joseph Smith Papers*, January 16, 1834, p. 24.

²⁰ Smith (journal), *The Joseph Smith Papers*, January 11, 1834, pp. 25-26.

elect speedily,” resulting in a quick return to Jackson County and fulfillment of the December revelation.²¹

On January 22, Hyde in his role as Clerk of the Presidency wrote a letter to the displaced Saints in Clay County with instructions for coping with the expulsion. Hyde identified the Ohio leadership as “companions in tribulation” who suffered along with those in Missouri and desired the restoration of Zion for both the Church of Christ and specific individuals.²² Missourians were encouraged to “prosecute and try every lawful means to bring the mob to justice.”²³ Also included in the letter was information regarding the role of the Ohio Church in contacting Missouri political leadership on the Missouri Church’s behalf, in particular Governor Daniel Dunklin who appeared sympathetic to the Mormon cause. Hyde indicated, “something like sixty brethren”²⁴ had signed a petition asking for intervention in Jackson County that was mailed along with a revelation detailing the importance of Zion to the Mormon faith. Despite the petition, the letter implied Smith and others were prepared for Governor Dunklin to ignore the request for help. If Missouri political leadership failed to respond, it became the responsibility of the Missouri Church leadership to “petition the Gov. to petition the President to send a force of men there to protect you.”²⁵ If Missouri’s governor refused to help, Smith and other leaders envisioned the use federal intervention to protect their rights.

²¹ Smith (journal), *The Joseph Smith Papers*, January 16, 1834, p. 26.

²² Smith (journal), *The Joseph Smith Papers*, January 22, 1834, p. 79.

²³ Smith (journal), *The Joseph Smith Papers*, January 22, 1834, p. 80.

²⁴ Smith (journal), *The Joseph Smith Papers*, January 22, 1834, p. 80.

²⁵ Smith (journal), *The Joseph Smith Papers*, January 22, 1834, p. 79.

At the behest of the Ohio leadership, the Missouri Mormon community, especially Mormon leadership, responded to persecution at the hands of Missourians by attempting to work within the established legal system to seek redress for their property losses—at least at first. Church members sought redress through local, state, and federal venues to regain property.²⁶ Missouri Church leadership, including Edward Partridge, W.W. Phelps, John Whitmer, A.S. Gilbert, and John Corrill, sent letters to Judge John Ryland, who served in the Missouri’s Fifth Circuit Court, Missouri Governor Daniel Dunklin, and U.S. President Jackson during February and April 1833. Besides references to religious persecution, the letters also displayed overtly republican language. They asked Ryland “to avail yourself of every means in your power to execute the law and make it honorable.”²⁷ They asked Governor Dunklin for his support in petitioning Andrew Jackson to intervene on their behalf. In the letter to Jackson, the Saints argued, “We know that such illegal violence has not been inflicted upon any sect or community of people by the citizens of the United States since the Declaration of Independence.”²⁸ In these letters, Missouri Church leaders insisted the mob acted on “religious, political, and speculative motives” against “a people whose respect and veneration for the laws of our country, and its pure republican principles are as great as that of any other society in the United States.”²⁹ By couching their request for redress in political language, the Mormons sought legitimacy they could not find as a religious group.

²⁶ Edwin Brown Firmage and Richard Collin Mangrum, *Zion in the Courts: A Legal History of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, 1830-1900*, (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1988).

²⁷ Whitmer, *John Whitmer’s History, 1831-1839*, p. 11.

²⁸ Whitmer, *John Whitmer’s History, 1831-1839*, p. 12.

²⁹ Whitmer, *John Whitmer’s History, 1831-1839*, p. 14.

Mormons also expressed their religious intentions in republican wording in statements their Missouri neighbors could access. According to a statement issued by the Mormon leadership in the *Missouri Intelligencer*, Mormons desired to build “a holy city unto God, New Jerusalem, a place which we were desirous to call Zion, as we believe a place of refuge from the scourges and plagues, which are so often mentioned in the Bible.”³⁰ That same group insisted, “peace is what we desire” and pledged that “we will not, and neither have designed, as a people, to commence hostilities against the aforesaid citizens of Jackson county.”³¹ Instead, Mormons “petitioned the Governor of this State, and the President of the United States, for redress of wrongs.”³² This use of the existing legal system in Missouri demonstrates the “great respect for the principles underlying the Constitution” the Mormons held and their desire for protection and equal rights under the law.³³ In addition, these actions allude to Mormons further using political and legal venues to achieve their religious goals throughout their tenure in Missouri.

Missouri governor Daniel Dunklin responded with political and legal concern to the Mormon difficulties in Jackson County. His first reaction appeared in the November 30, 1833, edition of the *Missouri Intelligencer*, in which he insisted, “No citizen, nor number of citizens, has the right to take redress of their grievances, *whether real or imaginary*, into their own hands.”³⁴ In addition, he pledged “that the courts will be open” to those Mormons who were displaced and urged them to contact him if he could “be of

³⁰ *Missouri Intelligencer*, October 11, 1834, 2-3.

³¹ *Missouri Intelligencer*, June 28, 1834, 3-2.

³² *Missouri Intelligencer*, October 11, 1834, 2-3.

³³ Firmage, *Zion in the Courts*, p. xi.

³⁴ *Missouri Intelligencer*, November 30, 1833, 1-2.

assistance to you in obtaining justice.”³⁵ On February 5, 1834, Dunklin issued an order to David Atchison, captain of the Liberty Blues (a local militia unit in Clay County), to “hold yourself and company in readiness to assist the civil authorities in apprehending and bringing to trial the persons offending the laws” during the Mormon conflict in November 1833.³⁶ Dunklin’s defense of his Mormon citizens resulted from his commitment to uphold liberty, not sympathy or identification with members of the religious sect. In a letter to Joel Haden, a politician in Howard County, Dunklin acknowledged, “I have no regard for the Mormons, as a separate people; & have an utter contempt for them as a religious sect...I have much regard for the people of Jackson county, both personally and politically...they are, my personal friends...and staunch democrats.”³⁷ However, Dunklin recognized his duty as governor and refused to act on personal preferences rather than his obligations to uphold the law as a governor.

Although the January 22 letter from Smith to the Church in Clay County outlined the responsibilities of the western Church in attempts to regain lost land and possessions, it also identified what actions the Ohio leadership were taking to assist in redeeming Zion. Smith still did not have a concrete plan for action in Missouri almost two months after the armed conflict; however, Smith indicated Ohio Mormons collected approximately \$100 for financial relief for those displaced in Missouri in the months following expulsion. He lamented that financial pressures and legal issues prevented them from raising more. The letter also explained, “There is not quite so much danger of

³⁵ *Missouri Intelligencer*, November 30, 1833, 1-2.

³⁶ *Missouri Intelligencer*, March 8, 1834, 2-3.

³⁷ Daniel Dunklin Papers, Letter to Joel Haden, August 15, 1834, Western Historical Manuscripts, University of Missouri-Columbia, C97, folder 8.

a mob upon us as there has been. The hand of the Lord has been stretched out to protect us.”³⁸ This explanation was most likely intended to provide encouragement and comfort to the Missouri Church while highlighting the important work in which the Ohio Church was engaged and the troubles that faced them there. Consequently, admonishments to the Missouri Church that losing Zion was a result of sinful behaviors might have been eased if the Ohio Church was suffering too.

In the same letter, Smith and other church leadership expressed the belief that Zion would be delivered within the year or, if that did not happen, a spiritual endowment to the Mormon Church would occur that would precede redemption. As such, the leaders demonstrated their confidence that the problems in Missouri would be speedily resolved while also allowing for a spiritual explanation if Missouri Mormons could not regain their possessions. In the following months, the connection between the condition of Zion and an endowment from God developed, but the letter to the Saints in Clay County was the first time this link was stated in print. Ohio leadership argued, “the affliction came upon the Church to chastin [sic] those in transgression, and prepare the hearts of those who had repented for an end[o]wment from the Lord.”³⁹ The promised endowment encouraged Mormons in both areas to adhere to Mormon tenets and obey revelations and other scriptural teachings during troubled times. The letter ended with a final reassurance to the Saints in Missouri, a reminder that they were blessed because “you have not purchased your lands by the shedding of blood.”⁴⁰ This reference to an August 30, 1831,

³⁸ Smith (journal), *The Joseph Smith Papers*, January 22, 1834, p. 80.

³⁹ Smith (journal), *The Joseph Smith Papers*, January 22, 1834, p. 80.

⁴⁰ Smith (journal), *The Joseph Smith Papers*, January 22, 1834, p. 81.

revelation further urged the Missouri Saints to remain inside the law and refrain from violence as they fought for redress.

Within a month, the position of Smith and the Ohio leadership shifted to a more specific plan to redeem Zion, including an armed body of Mormons to defend their right to land in Jackson County. Smith received a revelation on February 24, 1834, detailing “how to act in the discharge of your duties concerning the salvation & redemption of your brethren who have been scattered from the land of Zion.”⁴¹ According to this revelation, Jackson County remained firmly at the center of a future Mormon Zion with repeated assurances God would return the land to its rightful owners and punish those who thwarted the Church of Christ. Redeeming Zion would come “by power; therefore, I will raise up unto my people a man who shall lead them like as Moses led the children of Israel.”⁴² Smith was charged with gathering approximately 500 men who would march on Missouri in order to protect the Saints there from mobs and others who sought to persecute the Saints. Later called Zion’s Camp, this force was first known as the Camp of Israel. Its existence was supposed to send a clear message to Missourians and Missouri political leadership that Mormons intended to remain in control of their Jackson County Zion. Whether or not the armed men were intended as a fighting or protective force, a band of 500 armed Mormons comprised a radical shift from the end of the January 22 letter reminding the Missouri Saints they were just in their actions because they had gained their land through purchase and not bloodshed.

⁴¹ Smith (journal), *The Joseph Smith Papers*, February 24, 1834, p. 7.

⁴² Smith (journal), *The Joseph Smith Papers*, February 24, 1834, p. 11.

Three days later, on February 27, 1834, Phelps sent a letter to Smith and the Ohio leadership detailing the legal frustrations the Missouri Saints faced as well as the physical violence that continued to plague Jackson County. Phelps wrote that District Attorney Amos Rees and the Missouri Attorney General Robert Wells had informed Missouri Church leadership that “all hopes of *criminal prosecution*, was at an end.”⁴³ The attorneys found “it entirely unnecessary to investigate this subject on the part of the State, as the jury were equally concerned in the outrages committed it was therefore not likely that any bills would be found and consequently no good could possibly come from further investigation.”⁴⁴ Yet, Mormons were still targets of violence during January and February 1834. Phelps informed Smith that “the mob have commenced burning houses” and “sever[e]ly beat...with clubs” Missouri Mormons. “Even with a guard ordered by the Governor, for the protection of the court and witnesses,” Phelps argued all hopes of redress and restoration to Jackson County were ended.⁴⁵ Missouri political leadership and legal intervention had failed the Saints, but the February 24 revelation provided the answer. If the Missouri militia and Liberty Blues had failed to protect the Saints, then Smith himself would command the Camp of Israel that would allow Mormons to take back Jackson County and redeem Zion.

In the month following the revelation to redeem Zion, members of the Missouri Church communicated frequently with the Ohio branch and called for additional support that Smith and others were either not willing or prepared to provide. In a letter dated

⁴³ *Evening and Morning Star*, March 1834, 3-1.

⁴⁴ *Evening and Morning Star*, March 1834, 3-1.

⁴⁵ *Evening and Morning Star*, March 1834, 3-1.

March 30, 1834, the Ohio leadership chastised Missouri leaders for criticizing a perceived lack of support from Smith, Cowdery, Rigdon, and others. The letter states, “every man, woman & child that belongs to the Church, as far as I have any knowledge of the matter, are crying day & night for the deliverance and prosperity of Zion.”⁴⁶ Smith’s journal entries from March indicated he and Rigdon spent most of the month traveling in Ohio and surrounding areas specifically to raise money for the Missouri Saints as well as recruit members to participate in the Camp of Israel. Careful to show compassion for the persecuted in the West, Smith nevertheless explained that the Ohio Church had concerns of its own. The letter argued, “the saints in this region are not slack towards you considering the circumstances, & their great poverty, & afflictions & persecutions with which they are called to suffer in this part.”⁴⁷ Instead, Smith encouraged the Missouri Saints to be patient since the redemption of Zion must “be seen in due time” and through other means than through the legal systems he had previously encouraged.⁴⁸ At the time, the Ohio leadership saw “no other way now; but the Lord may open other ways in time.”⁴⁹ Smith needed more time to properly gather an adequate force, and it would take another five weeks before Mormons marched on Jackson County.

A week later, Smith wrote another letter to Orson Hyde in which he explained he was “much grieved on learning that you were not like [sic] to succeed according to our

⁴⁶ "Letter to Edward Partridge and Others, 30 March 1834," pp. 30-38, The Joseph Smith Papers, <http://www.josephsmithpapers.org/paper-summary/letter-to-edward-partridge-and-others-30-march-1834/1>, p. 30.

⁴⁷ "Letter to Edward Partridge," The Joseph Smith Papers, p. 30.

⁴⁸ "Letter to Edward Partridge," The Joseph Smith Papers, p. 30.

⁴⁹ "Letter to Edward Partridge," The Joseph Smith Papers, p. 35.

expectations” about redress in Jackson County.⁵⁰ Although Smith still hesitated in committing to leading an expeditionary force to Missouri, the April 7, 1834, letter coincided with the end of a particularly frustrating period of persecution in Smith’s life. In the final months of 1833, Doctor Philastus Hurlburt, who had been a Methodist preacher prior to his conversion to Mormonism, filed legal action against Smith regarding “character flaws” that threatened his public reputation as a prophet and religious leader. Finding no satisfaction in court, Hurlburt gave up his smear campaign against Smith, allowing the religious leader to shift his attention to the problems in Missouri.⁵¹ Whether Hurlburt’s actions impacted Smith’s attitude toward the Missouri crisis or not, Smith’s words were significantly more bellicose by discussing a vengeful God who would protect the faithful and “put forth his Almyhty hand to bring to pass” justice.⁵² At least three journal entries in late April discuss the deliverance of Zion and the need for volunteers to march with Zion’s Camp.⁵³ Despite what Missouri Mormons perceived as a delayed response to the crisis there, Smith’s actions indicated he and others in Ohio wanted to be adequately prepared before making the journey.

Zion’s Camp left Kirtland on May 1, 1834, and reached full force on May 6, 1834, when members from New Portage joined with them.⁵⁴ Smith left no record of those events in his journals, but frequent communication among Church leadership

⁵⁰ "Letter to Edward Partridge," The Joseph Smith Papers, p. 35.

⁵¹ Bushman, *Joseph Smith: Rough Stone Rolling*, pp. 231-232.

⁵² "Letter to Orson Hyde, 7 April 1834," pp. 82-84, The Joseph Smith Papers, <http://www.josephsmithpapers.org/paper-summary/letter-to-orson-hyde-7-april-1834/1>, p. 83.

⁵³ Smith (journal), *The Joseph Smith Papers*, April 17, 1834; April 19, 1834; April 21, 1834, pp. 40-42.

⁵⁴ Bushman, *Joseph Smith: Rough Stone Rolling*, p. 237.

provided a sizable record of the company's experience. Leaving only days after W. W. Phelps wrote a letter about renewed violence towards Mormons in Jackson and Clay counties, about 100 men began the trek to Missouri.⁵⁵ Writing on May 1, 1834, Phelps claimed, "The crisis is come: All that will not take up arms with the mob and prepare to fight the 'Mormons,' have to leave Jackson County."⁵⁶ He recounted rumors spread among Missourians that the Saints had planned an attack to retake their lost lands. Stirred up by the reports, Missourians "'prepared for war' on Saturday and on Sunday took the field" in action that "closed with burning our [Mormon] houses," possibly as many as 170 different structures.⁵⁷ Almost certainly, Smith did not receive the missive before leaving Ohio, but the renewed violence surely played a role in the determination of participants for a successful expedition. In addition, those events must have stoked apprehension among the company's members just as the news of a Mormon militia marching toward Missouri frightened the Missourians.⁵⁸

Reports that able-bodied Mormon men passed through Springfield, Illinois, with the intention of defending their land and restoring their property in Missouri appeared in newspapers throughout the month of June in 1834. In response, Mormons "avowed their intention of acting entirely upon the defensive; but expressed a firm resolution of claiming the rights of their society at all hazards, and of resolutely defending the Holy

⁵⁵ Smith (journal), *The Joseph Smith Papers*, May 4, 1834, p. 44.

⁵⁶ "Letter from William W. Phelps, 1 May 1834," p. 160, *The Joseph Smith Papers*, <http://www.josephsmithpapers.org/paper-summary/letter-from-william-w-phelps-1-may-1834/1>, p. 160.

⁵⁷ "Letter from William W. Phelps," *The Joseph Smith Papers*, p. 160.

⁵⁸ Bushman, *Joseph Smith: Rough Stone Rolling*, p. 238.

Land.”⁵⁹ A contingent of Mormon leaders, including Smith, insisted, “We want to live in peace with all men, and equal rights is all we ask. We wish to become permanent citizens of this State, and wish to bear our proportion in support of the Government, and to be protected by its laws.”⁶⁰ Bonds with Governor Dunklin and protection from Missourians by local militias had been the Saints’ first means to reconcile differences with their Missouri neighbors. Smith, however, warned that the government’s failure to adequately satisfy their frustrations could result in retaliation. Mormon leadership declared, “the shedding of blood, is entirely foreign to our feelings. The shedding of blood we shall not be guilty of until all just and honorable means among men prove insufficient to restore peace.”⁶¹ Throughout the aftermath of the 1833 conflict in Jackson County, Mormons and their leaders continued to seek to first act within the legal and political framework of the state. However, Zion-centered theology continued to play a central role in the Mormon worldview and justified retaliation against Jackson County residents who drove the Mormons from Independence and prohibited the recovery of Zion.

By mid-1834, the Mormon faithful were forced to abandon attempts to establish the Missouri Zion for the time being. Although clashes between Mormons and non-believers were common in many locations, the loss of Zion unequivocally contradicted the revelations and commandments God had given the sect prior to expulsion. In his history, Correll recorded that the Saints knew by early 1834 “they would be unable to get

⁵⁹ *Missouri Intelligencer*, June 21, 1834, 3-1.

⁶⁰ *Missouri Intelligencer*, October 11, 1834, 2-3.

⁶¹ *Missouri Intelligencer*, October 11, 1834, 2-3.

justice.”⁶² Yet, a declaration signed by Smith and other Church leaders dated June 1, 1834, in Clay County indicated the Saints intended to “go back upon our lands in Jackson County by order of the Executive if possible.”⁶³ Instead of relying on religious language, the declaration used political rhetoric to legitimize the Mormon settlers as respectable citizens. Smith’s insistence that the Saints continue to work within the existing political and legal system even after Missouri leaders communicated that those venues had not worked contributed to the arguments Winn, Fluhman, and Hill make in their works. Those authors link the conflicts between Mormons and Missourians to a disagreement over republican ideals. Insistence that Mormons were “honorable and [use] constitutional principles” provided Smith and the larger Mormon community legitimacy in Missourians’ eyes as they fought for redress.⁶⁴ While Missouri leaders like McCoy maintained the problem with Mormons was not religion, the June 21 declaration appears to support that model too—even though the April 10, 1834, letter to Jackson claimed religious persecution against the Saints. In other words, both the Saints and those who persecuted them couched the conflicts in republican rhetoric in order to deflect criticism for religious persecution.

The day after releasing the declaration, Smith received a revelation declaring “it is expedient in me [God] that mine elders should wait for a little season for the redemption of Zion.”⁶⁵ With redress blocked through anything other than divine intervention, new

⁶² Corrill, *A Brief History of the Church*, p. 21.

⁶³ "Declaration, 21 June 1834," pp. [1-2], The Joseph Smith Papers, <http://www.josephsmithpapers.org/paper-summary/declaration-21-june-1834/1>, p. 1.

⁶⁴ "Declaration, 21 June 1834," The Joseph Smith Papers, p. 1.

⁶⁵ "Revelation, 22 June 1834 [D&C 105]," pp. 97-100, The Joseph Smith Papers, <http://www.josephsmithpapers.org/paper-summary/revelation-22-june-1834-dc-105/1>, p. 97.

instructions for reclaiming Jackson County called for an onset of the endowment before Mormons could make any more progress. Zion's Camp was not needed to "fight the battles of Zion"; instead, the revelation divulged that God would lead the return to Zion when the time was right.⁶⁶ Until that time, Mormons were to purchase "all the lands in Jackson county that can be purchased and in the adjoining counties round about" so that the Saints would be prepared to return as easily as possible.⁶⁷ In addition, the leaders of Zion's Camp dissolved the group and ordered its members to return home to Ohio and other areas in the East. They were to remain there until they could be "prepared" and "taught more" in anticipation of the promised endowment, which would deliver a flood of religious blessings that would benefit the Church of Christ.⁶⁸ On June 25, 1834, Smith wrote in a letter, "we have concluded that our company shall be immediately dispersed and continue so. till every effort for an adjustment of differences between us and the people of Jackson has been made on our part, that would in any wise be required of us by disinterested men of republican principle."⁶⁹ While Governor Dunklin and other political leaders refused to help the Saints reclaim their land directly preceding these new religious instructions, the revelation provided theological support for the actions Smith and other Church leaders adopted by mid-1834.

Most likely, Missourians were not aware of the June 22 revelation when a committee of citizens from Lafayette County created a series of resolutions regarding

⁶⁶ "Revelation, 22 June 1834 [D&C 105]," The Joseph Smith Papers, p. 98.

⁶⁷ "Revelation, 22 June 1834 [D&C 105]," The Joseph Smith Papers, p. 99.

⁶⁸ "Revelation, 22 June 1834 [D&C 105]," The Joseph Smith Papers, p. 97.

⁶⁹ "Letter to John Thornton and Others, 25 June 1834," pp. 505-506, The Joseph Smith Papers, accessed March 21, 2017, <http://www.josephsmithpapers.org/paper-summary/letter-to-john-thornton-and-others-25-june-1834/1>, p. 505.

Zion's Camp on June 23, 1834. Zachariah Linville, the committee's chairman, resolved, "the citizens of Lafayette County...will not take any part between the Jacksonians and original Mormons."⁷⁰ Since Lafayette bordered Jackson County to the east, its citizens would have been aware of the troubles in Independence in November 1833. However, what concerned those in Lafayette County were the number of "foreign Mormons," armed and (what the Missourians considered) ready to fight, who had gathered in Clay County. The presence of an outside source of agitation beyond the Mormons with whom Missourians had already interacted contributed to fears and suspicions of the religious group since the resolutions indicate intervention would occur only if foreign Mormons, or those from outside Missouri, became involved. Labeling an unwanted group as foreigners or outside agitators provided Missourians another level of protection against criticism for discriminating against the Missouri Saints. By declaring that Smith and members of Zion's Camp were different from those Mormons who sought refuge from the problems in Jackson County, Missourians could justify the use of force.⁷¹

Following the disbandment of Zion's Camp and the return of the Ohio Church leadership back to the east, Smith's attention turned to the onset of the promised endowment, publication of religious texts, and theological changes that skewed the Mormon Church further away from other Protestant groups in the United States. In the intervening years between the Jackson County conflict and the Mormon War in 1838, Smith introduced new or developed previously revealed concepts into full-fledged facets

⁷⁰ "Resolutions of Committee from Lafayette County, Missouri, 23 June 1834," pp. [1-2], The Joseph Smith Papers, <http://www.josephsmithpapers.org/paper-summary/resolutions-of-committee-from-lafayette-county-missouri-23-june-1834/1>, p. 1.

⁷¹ While Fluhman, Hill, and Winn all discuss anti-republicanism as a method by which Mormons were discredited and "justifiably" persecuted, labeling Ohio Mormons as "foreigner" seems to fit in the larger trend of local groups viewing "outsiders" as those who create violence and unrest in specific areas.

of Mormon theology—all of which drove the Mormon Church away from the Protestant mainstream and created additional tension with neighbors in both Missouri and Ohio. On January 26, 1836, Smith received a visitor in Kirtland named Mr. Olived. The guest posed a number of questions about what by that time was called the Church of Christ of Latter Day Saints, and Smith courteously answered. When the man asked how Mormons differed from “other christian denomination I replied that we believe the bible, and they do not.”⁷² Although the differences among the religious groups were more complicated than Smith’s pithy explanation, Smith had implemented significant theological changes that defined Mormonism as a unique sect within the restoration movement.

In the same journal entry, Smith recounted a vision of Heaven that demonstrated differences between the Mormon Church and other Protestant denominations.⁷³ He wrote of a multi-leveled Heaven containeding “degrees of glory,” missions to foreign lands, and the redemption of Zion.⁷⁴ Alluded to first in a February 16, 1832, vision, Smith’s view of the Celestial Kingdom developed during the first half of the 1830s to include the celestial, terrestrial, and telestial realms in addition to one of “no glory.” The celestial realm was the pinnacle of the Heavenly hierarchy where the wholly faithful lived after death. This included those who were members of the Church of Christ of Latter Day Saints and had held to the sacraments, ordinances, and commandments of the Church during their time on Earth. Below the celestial realm was the terrestrial kingdom where “honorable men” who were just and good but failed to believe in the “fulness” of the

⁷² Smith (journal), *The Joseph Smith Papers*, January 21, 1836, p. 166.

⁷³ Smith (journal), *The Joseph Smith Papers*, January 21, 1836, p. 168.

⁷⁴ Bushman, *Joseph Smith: Rough Stone Rolling*, p. 196.

gospel; in other words, those who adhered to Christian principles but were not members of the Mormon Church.⁷⁵ The lowest level of Heaven was the telestial kingdom, which was reserved for those who suffered on earth and refused to believe but would be justified at the end of time. Only those who had once believed in the Saints' work and then apostatized against the Church would be rejected from the three kingdom levels as "sons of perdition."⁷⁶ For a religious sect whose foundation was firmly rooted in a rapidly changing Congregationalism, the development of a degreed Heaven coincided with the advent of Unitarianism in Boston and other areas in New England. Smith's vision remained uniquely separate from the Universalist movement, but Methodists, Baptists, and other restoration denominations, such as the Campbellites, rejected all methods of universal salvation during the antebellum period.⁷⁷ The vision also included language that hinted at the later Mormon tenet of baptism for the dead or baptism by proxy, although that practice was not officially established until after the group had removed to Nauvoo and opened the temple there in the 1840s. Smith's journal entry included the justification that "all who have died with[out] a knowledge of this gospel, who would have received it, if they had been permitted to tarry, shall be heirs of the celestial kingdom of God."⁷⁸ The extent to which those outside the Mormon Church knew about (or how widely known it was outside of Church leadership) these theological developments cannot be determined, but other Protestant groups in Missouri and Ohio would have rejected the multi-leveled Heaven and baptism of the dead.

⁷⁵ *Doctrine and Covenants*, Section XCI, p. 225-231.

⁷⁶ Bushman, *Joseph Smith: Rough Stone Rolling*, p. 196.

⁷⁷ Holifield, *Theology in America*, pp. 197-233.

⁷⁸ Smith (journal), *The Joseph Smith Papers*, January 21, 1836, p.168.

Smith also received other revelations and visions that shaped the organizational structure of the Church between 1834 and 1836 and vastly expanded leadership roles in the two different branches. Bushman argues, “In 1830, the Church was organized as a church like other churches” with similar leadership style, organizational structure, and theological beliefs about the priesthood.⁷⁹ On February 17, 1834, Smith organized a High Council that served as a governing body for the Mormon Church. The council included twelve members with various political, religious, and educational roles, and although based in Kirtland, served the entire Church. Five months later, Smith organized another council for the Missouri Church centered in Clay County with David Whitmer as president. Since Kirtland and Clay County served as the two centers for the Church, the high councils functioned as equal bodies within the Church, thus leading to the development of Zion’s stakes. The councils provided “a regular form of government” for the stakes, which would expand as new cities and churches emerged with the growth of the Mormon faith.⁸⁰ Prior to the organization of the Missouri High Council, Zion referred exclusively to Jackson County, but that changed during the dedication of the Kirtland Temple on March 27, 1836. Smith asked God “to appoint unto Zion other stakes besides this one...that the gathering of thy people may roll on in great power and majesty.”⁸¹ Over the course of the next few years, Zion’s meaning expanded to refer to the larger Mormon Church, which would gather in Jackson County once Zion was restored. Delays in redress frustrated those efforts until the language in Smith’s journals

⁷⁹ Bushman, *Joseph Smith: Rough Stone Rolling*, p. 254.

⁸⁰ Bushman, *Joseph Smith: Rough Stone Rolling*, p. 254.

⁸¹ Smith (journal), *The Joseph Smith Papers*, March 27, 1836, p. 209.

and other writings indicated Zion needed a larger geographic designation that coincided with the state of the Church as well as missionary efforts to convert others to the Mormon faith.⁸²

Besides the expansion of church leadership during the mid-1830s, two different orders of the priesthood became solidified during the intermediate period between the two conflicts in Missouri. Revelations in 1831, 1833, and 1835 provided the foundations for the two tiered priesthood in the Mormon Church. Smith established the Aaronic priesthood first, which was the lower of the two orders. The Melchizedek priesthood, the higher order, emerged later, but both were firmly entrenched in the Mormon faith by the end of 1836. The high priesthood was in charge of “the keys of the mysteries of the kingdom, even the key of the knowledge of God,” spiritual blessings, baptism, and helping members receive the Holy Spirit. The lower priesthood’s responsibilities lay in more temporal concerns, such as caring for the poor and managing Church property.⁸³ The two priesthood orders combined with Church leadership to provide a distinctly hierarchical structure. This new tiered leadership structure would have probably seemed somewhat familiar to Methodist adherents, but the Baptists and Campbellites, both of which were organized with significant powers held within individual congregations, probably considered the Mormon structure comparable to Catholicism.

Besides the expansion of church leadership and the priesthood, the long-awaited endowment differentiated the Church of Christ of Latter Day Saints from other Protestant

⁸² Journal entries between 1834 and 1836 show this change in language. Prior to the organizations of the High Councils, Smith’s references to Zion seem to indicate Jackson County. By the end of 1836, Zion seems to indicate the larger Mormon Church. However, that did not mean Smith had given up on returning to Jackson County—only that Zion was a religious concept more than a place.

⁸³ Bushman, *Joseph Smith: Rough Stone Rolling*, pp. 258-259.

groups by the mid-1830s. Smith created an in depth explanation of the endowment in his November 12, 1835, journal entry. He admonished members of the Church to “be watchful and prayerful” and “if God gives you a manifestation, keep it to yourselves.”⁸⁴ In a letter to Church Officers in Missouri dated August 31, 1835, he counseled, “it is wisdom that the church should make but little or no stir in that region and cause as little excitement as possible and endure their afflictions patiently until the time appointed.”⁸⁵ Because Smith believed the endowment had to occur before Zion could be redeemed and the temple in Kirtland had to open before God would send the endowment, he encouraged members in Ohio and Missouri to divert their attention to helping raise the funds and support needed to open the temple. In a June 1835 letter to the Church, Smith argued all levels of Mormon leaders and members should not be idle. Instead, they should “Do good and work righteousness with an eye single to the glory of God, and you shall reap your reward when the Lord recompenses every one according to his work.”⁸⁶ When it came, Smith believed “our blessings will be such as we have not realized before, nor in this generation.”⁸⁷ Perhaps more importantly, the onset of the endowment meant the Saints were one step closer to regaining Jackson County and controlling the center of Zion. Smith believed once the endowment had occurred, “the destroying angel will follow close at your heels and execute his tremendous mission upon the children of

⁸⁴ Smith (journal), *The Joseph Smith Papers*, November 12, 1835, p. 98.

⁸⁵ "Letter to Church Officers in Missouri, 31 August 1835," pp. 77-81, *The Joseph Smith Papers*, <http://www.josephsmithpapers.org/paper-summary/letter-to-church-officers-in-missouri-31-august-1835/1>, p. 78.

⁸⁶ "Letter to the Saints Scattered Abroad, June 1835," pp. 137-138, *The Joseph Smith Papers*, <http://www.josephsmithpapers.org/paper-summary/letter-to-the-saints-scattered-abroad-june-1835/1>, p. 137.

⁸⁷ Smith (journal), *The Joseph Smith Papers*, November 12, 1835, p. 98.

disobediance [sic], and destroy the workers of iniquity, while the saints will be gathered out from among them and stand in holy places ready to meet the bridegroom when he comes.”⁸⁸ Once the Kirtland Saints dedicated the temple in March 1836, the Church entered a period of Pentecost with foot washings and visions of angels, and leaders of the Church believed returning to Jackson County was inevitable.

After the Kirtland Temple was consecrated and the endowment occurred, Smith shifted his attention back to the redemption and recovery of Jackson County as Zion for the Saints. Smith recorded a dozen references to the redemption of Zion between September 1835 and April 1836, when he believed the Saints would return to Missouri and repossess the lands lost in the fall of 1833. During the dedication of the temple, Smith asked God to “redeem that which thou didst appoint a Zion unto my people.”⁸⁹ In his September 24, 1835, entry, Smith claimed the “spirit of the Lord” indicated the Saints would “be set back on their Lands next spring [1836] and we go next season to live or dy.” Besides continued attempts to petition Governor Dunklin, Mormons “drew up an Article of inrollment for the redemption of Zion that we may obtain...Eight hundred men (or one thousand) well armed.”⁹⁰ Although by the spring of 1836 Smith abandoned plans to take another armed force into Missouri, his journal entries demonstrated the importance the recovery of Jackson County was to the Saints and the gathering of Zion.

Following Smith’s decision to disband Zion’s Camp in June 1834, Smith and other Church leaders tended to use millennial language more than overt references to

⁸⁸ Smith (journal), *The Joseph Smith Papers*, November 12, 1835, p. 98-99.

⁸⁹ Smith (journal), *The Joseph Smith Papers*, March 27, 1836, p. 208.

⁹⁰ Smith (journal), *The Joseph Smith Papers*, September 24, 1835, p. 64.

persecution. Smith mentioned the destroying angel in his November 12, 1835, journal entry, but it also included references to John the Revelator and the Millennium. Smith lauded the steadfast surety of the Mormon faithful by writing, “the order of the house of God has and ever will be the same, even after Christ comes, and after the termination of the thousand years it will be the same, and we shall finally roll into the celestial kingdom of God and enjoy it forever.”⁹¹ On October 7, 1835, Smith declared, “when his [Newel Whitney’s] enemies seek him unto his hurt and distruction let him rise up and curse and the hand of God shall be upon his enemies in Judgment they shall be utterly confounded and brought to desolation.”⁹² At the time Smith recorded this entry, Whitney held the position of bishop in the Church in Kirtland but functioned in that capacity over the entire Church. As he worked to ensure the safety and care of Church members in Ohio and Missouri, he faced frustrations that could very well have been perceived as persecution.

If Smith’s language focused more on millennial concepts, leaders of the Missouri Church did use language that smacked of persecution. John Whitmer, who served as church historian and a member of the presidency in Missouri, recorded the movements of Missouri leadership following the onset of the endowment in March 1836. Missouri leaders Edward Partridge, Isaac Morley, John Corrill, and W. W. Phelps left Ohio after the dedication of the Kirtland Temple and returned to Clay County. Whitmer noted that the men returned to Missouri safely, “but as soon as these men arrived at home the Devil roared in this land and stirred the old Jackson County mob up to great anger, and the people in Clay County.” Because Clay County no longer offered a place of refuge, “the

⁹¹ Smith (journal), *The Joseph Smith Papers*, November 12, 1835, p. 98.

⁹² Smith (journal), *The Joseph Smith Papers*, October 7, 1835, p. 71.

aforementioned brethren went in search of a place where the church could settle in peace and found a country north of Ray County that would answer the purpose.” Unfortunately for the Saints, even removal to the newly named Caldwell County failed to satisfy citizens of Clay County. Whitmer wrote, “the people of Clay County convened and some were determined to drive the brethren from the State; others were opposed and finally we succeeded to get the consent.”⁹³ During the summer of 1836, the Missouri Saints began the settlement of Far West, the main village in Caldwell County at that time.

Smith faced a series of legal and religious challenges during 1836 and 1837, which resulted in a significant amount of freedom for the Missouri leadership to build up Far West as they saw fit. Very little correspondence between Smith and the Missouri Church leaders took place between July 1836 and July 1837. W. W. Phelps wrote to the Ohio Church on July 7, 1837, to report “a great and glorious day in Far West.” He recorded a gathering on July 3 of “more than fifteen hundred saints...to break the ground for the Lord’s House,” meaning the Missouri Church planned to build a temple in Far West. Phelps wrote that the number of Mormon converts continued to increase, but the financial problems and temporal concerns that had plagued the Saints in Jackson and Clay counties were no longer a problem. Instead, “no one has lacked a meal, or went hungry.” Within the first year of settlement, Far West contained eight stores and approximately 100 buildings. Pleased with this progress, Phelps wrote, “If the brethren abroad are wise, and will come on with means and help enter the land populate the Co. and build the Lord’s House, we shall soon have one of the most precious spots on the

⁹³ Whitmer, *John Whitmer’s History*, p. 21.

Globe.”⁹⁴ From this report, the move to Caldwell County had been a successful one for the Missouri Saints.

Despite the accomplishments in Caldwell County, both Whitmer and Phelps recorded rumblings of unrest in their records. Whitmer’s history included references to “difficulties” in Kirtland, which he worried would “end in the misery of some precious souls.” However, problems in Caldwell County were “all settled to the satisfaction of all parties.”⁹⁵ There was no mention of what those problems were, but Phelps reported, “Public notice has been given by the *mob* in Davi[es] county...for Mormons to leave that county by the first of August, and go into Caldwell.” He lamented, “Our enemies will not slumber, til Satan knows the bigness of his lot.”⁹⁶ Bordering Caldwell County to the north, Daviess County had not been part of the agreement between the Missouri Mormons and citizens of Clay County for resettlement. While the bulk of the Missouri Church did settle in Caldwell, a smaller contingent of Mormons established a community called Adam-ondi-Ahman in Daviess County. Mormons also settled Dewitt in Carroll County, which neighbored Caldwell to the southeast and Lafayette (whose citizens had released a resolution against Zion’s Camp in 1834) to the north. Although the State of Missouri had approved of and organized Caldwell County exclusively for the Missouri Saints, increased numbers of converts and emigrants to the state and the refusal of

⁹⁴ "Letter from William W. Phelps, 7 July 1837," p. [529], The Joseph Smith Papers, <http://www.josephsmithpapers.org/paper-summary/letter-from-william-w-phelps-7-july-1837/1>, p. 529.

⁹⁵ Whitmer, *John Whitmer's History*, p. 21.

⁹⁶ "Letter from William W. Phelps" The Joseph Smith Papers, p. 529.

Mormons to stay within the boundaries of their designated county perpetuated tension with Missourians during 1837.⁹⁷

The Ohio Church was also in turmoil in late 1837 with dissension against Smith by other Church leaders, failure of the Kirtland Bank, and debt for the Kirtland Temple plaguing the Kirtland Saints. On September 4, 1837, Smith wrote a letter to John Corrill and the Missouri Church to provide instruction and advice for regulating “the affairs of the Church in zion whenever they become disorganized.” Although the Phelps letter indicated few problems in Far West, in the Ohio Church Smith lamented, “Bretheren we have waided [sic] through a scene of affliction and sorrow thus far for the will of God, that language is inadequate to describe pray ye therefore with more earnestness for our redemption.”⁹⁸ Much of the letter recounted minutes of a conference in which members of the Ohio Church leadership justified their actions and either remained in leadership positions or were removed from them. An addendum explained the purpose for conveying that information to the Missouri Church—internal threats from apostatizing Mormons. Smith cautioned the Missouri Church leadership to “beware of all disaffected Characters for they come not to build up but to destroy & scatter abroad.”⁹⁹ The embattled religious leader warned the Missouri Saints to be wary of any member or “Angel from Heaven preach any other Gospel.” Those heretics and any Saint who believed them should be “accursed” and removed from the Church. With the problem of dissension in the Ohio Church behind him, Smith traveled with Rigdon to Caldwell

⁹⁷ Le Sueur, *The 1838 Mormon War in Missouri*, pp. 23-27.

⁹⁸ "Letter to John Corrill and the Church in Missouri, 4 September 1837," p. 18-23, The Joseph Smith Papers, <http://www.josephsmithpapers.org/paper-summary/letter-to-john-corrill-and-the-church-in-missouri-4-september-1837/1>, p. 18.

⁹⁹ "Letter to John Corrill and the Church in Missouri," The Joseph Smith Papers, p. 21.

County in the fall of 1837 to prepare for their removal to Missouri during the upcoming spring. In his history, Whitmer reported, “The situation of the Church both here and in Kirtland is in an unpleasant situation in consequence of the reorganization of its authorities, which was not satisfactory to all concerned. And has terminated in the expulsion of some members.”¹⁰⁰ He also suggested unsatisfactory conclusions to temporal matters resulted in expulsions too. He followed this information with a redacted entry, probably recorded in early 1838, that claimed, “among whom [had been expelled] is W.W. Phelps and myself.” Although Whitmer’s brief history failed to record the particulars for why he and Phelps were chastised, his record hinted at growing problems between Smith and other Ohio leaders and the Missouri Church, which would be a source of contention for the Saints during 1838.

In the years between the expulsion from Jackson County and the Mormon War in 1838, the religious community continued to clash with Missourians. In addition, the Ohio Church underwent a series of persecutions and theological developments that resulted in Joseph Smith and the rest of the Ohio leadership moving to Caldwell County, Missouri, in the early months of 1838. Smith’s removal to Missouri resulted in a clash with Missouri Church leaders that led to anger, excommunication, and a struggle for control by leaders on both sides. Those conflicts between the two groups created growing tensions within the Church of Christ of Latter Day Saints that contributed to the open conflict in 1838. Despite religious similarities between Mormons and other Protestant groups in late 1833, armed conflict, the expansion of church leadership and the priesthood, and the endowment created tension, resentment, and anger inside and outside

¹⁰⁰ Whitmer, *John Whitmer’s History*, p. 21.

the Mormon Church that could not be contained. By mid-1838, the strain on Church members and with Missourians exploded into armed conflict and ultimately expulsion from the state by the end of 1838.

Chapter 4—Persecuting the Saints

As the threat of the mob came against the Mormons in Jackson County during July 1833, members of the sect believed and accepted persecution as part of the righteousness of their cause no matter where they resided. In a letter dated June 3, 1833, George M. Hinkle, a Mormon missionary near Quincy, Illinois, claimed “Persecution rages to a considerable extent. It seems as if every denomination, sect, party, and club, were prepared to fight against the work of the Lord.”¹ Yet, many Mormons believed “they would be better off in Zion than in the world, troubled as it is.”² Zion was supposed to promise relief from the “plagues, famines, pestilences, and utter destruction upon the ungodly” the Saints believed waited for unbelievers. Despite the troubles facing the religious group in Jackson County, few doubted God had secured it for the Saints. In a letter from the Missouri Saints to the Churches Abroad, Phelps assured readers, “the Lord has begun to gather His children, even Israel, that they may prepare to enter into and enjoy His rest when He comes in His glory, and He will do it.” Despite the problems the Missouri Church faced, Phelps insisted, “No matter what your ideas or notions may be upon the subject, no matter what foolish reports the wicked may circulate to gratify an evil disposition, the Lord will continue to gather the righteous, and destroy the wicked.”³ This surety shrouded the Saints’ efforts in Jackson County during 1833, so they were certainly frustrated by resistance from Missourians, including religious leaders. Continued references to persecution and cautions to those Mormons seeking to enter

¹ *Time and Seasons*, March 1, 1845, 1-2.

² B. H. Roberts, editor, *History of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints, Volume 1*, (Salt Lake City: The Deseret Book Company, 1987), p. 384.

³ Roberts, *History of the Church, Volume 1*, p. 384.

Jackson County demonstrated an underlying uneasiness with the situation in Zion. Persecution was a threat from not just the Missouri residents who Smith and others believed lacked civilization but also well-respected political, civil, and religious leaders. Those men participated in and sometimes led the mobs that challenged the Mormons, and many of them practiced and worked in the Methodist, Baptist, Presbyterian, and Campbellite (Disciples of Christ) churches.⁴

Political and civic leaders often received the most criticism from Missourians outside of Jackson County and the surrounding area for participation in mobs and persecuting the Mormon community. Mormons distrusted those same leaders as well. Partridge identified Lilburn Boggs, the Lieutenant Governor of Missouri in 1833, as the head of the Jackson County mob. Boggs was “the second officer in the State, calmly looking on, and secretly aiding every movement, saying to the saints, ‘You now know what our Jackson boys can do, and you must leave the country.’”⁵ The fact that “justices, judges, constables, sheriffs, and military officers” participated in the mob angered the Mormons since those positions were charged with upholding the law and protecting the Saints and their property. Frequent references to the laws of the county, state, and nation peppered accounts of Mormon outrages regarding their treatment in Missouri, and failures by political, civic, judicial, and military leaders to uphold the law was at the basis of that consternation.⁶ Phelps argued, “civil law did not give them a sufficient guarantee to drive our people from the county.”⁷ Failed attempts to protect Mormon interests

⁴ Roberts, *History of the Church, Volume 1*, p. 265.

⁵ *Time and Seasons*, March 1, 1845, 4-1.

⁶ Winn, *Exiles in a Land of Liberty*, pp. 63-84.

⁷ *Evening and Morning Star*, January 1834, 2-2.

through formal petitions to Missouri Governor Daniel Dunklin and President Andrew Jackson contributed to the frustration of the Saints and the certainty of Missouri citizens that their actions were justified.

While lack of support from civic leaders and substantial financial losses for Jackson County Mormons incensed the religious sect, the leadership and participation of ministers and missionaries angered Mormons as well. Whether religious leaders in Missouri were willing to admit it or not, Mormons believed religion constituted the main reason for the presence of the mob; not only did Mormons believe they were persecuted for their religion, they also blamed religious leaders for leading that persecution. Besides McCoy, Partridge testified to the involvement of a number of “western missionaries and clergymen” who both led and participated in the vigilante groups who drove Mormons from their press, homes, and land in 1833. Partridge named “the Reverends McCoy, Kavanaugh, Hunter, Fitzhugh, Pixley, Likens, Lovelady, and Bogard, consisting of Methodists, Baptists, Presbyterians, and all the different sects of religionists that inhabited that country.”⁸ Simonds Ryder, a Campbellite minister was also identified as a leader of the mob.⁹ However it was “that great moral reformer, and Register of the Land Office at Lexington, forty miles east, known as the head and father of the Cumberland Presbyterians, even the Reverend Finis Ewing,” who represented a strong fiendish presence within the mob.¹⁰ By 1836, Peter Hardeman Burnett, a future Campbellite convert and newspaper editor, joined the ranks of influential Missourians who wanted the

⁸ Roberts, *History of the Church, Volume 1*, pp. 392-393. In this list, “Likens” is most likely McCoy’s partner and son-in-law, Lykins.

⁹ Roberts, *History of the Church, Volume 1*, pp. 263-264.

¹⁰ Roberts, *History of the Church, Volume 1*, pp. 392-393.

Mormons expelled from Jackson and Clay counties. Together, these men represented a bastion of anti-Mormon sentiment and likely disseminated that information to members of their congregations and newspaper subscribers. In short, they wielded significant power in the fight against their Mormon neighbors.

Prior to the persecution of the Saints in Jackson County in 1833, Benton Pixley, a Baptist minister and missionary to the Native Americans like Isaac McCoy, observed the actions of Mormons in Jackson County. Although Pixley's private papers provide little insight into his specific feelings towards Mormons, Pixley publicly criticized members of the Mormon Church from 1831 until their expulsion from Jackson County in late 1833. While his personal papers were filled with concerns about his missionary work and the supplies he needed to perform his job, he wrote letters to newspaper editors lambasting the Mormons for their religious and political beliefs and their material condition.¹¹ In 1831, his letters were published in Missouri papers, but his voice gained a wider audience the next year. He shared his opinions in letters to the editor of the *Christian Watchman*, the oldest Baptist weekly newspaper in the nation published in Boston. He sent two letters dated October 12, 1832, and November 7, 1833, about the Mormon difficulties in Jackson County that were then published in a variety of other papers, including the *Missouri Intelligencer* in Columbia, Missouri. Like McCoy, Pixley held a low opinion of his Mormon neighbors, partially for religious reasons and partly because of the economic conditions of the religious adherents. His vehement disapproval of Mormon beliefs and

¹¹ Three letters written by Benton Pixley to fellow Baptists about the school he ran in Indian Territory are housed at the Special Collections in the Curry Library at William Jewell College in Liberty, Missouri. There is no mention of Mormons or the conflict in Jackson County in these letters.

the way they lived resulted in character attacks on Mormons before any physical violence or organized mob action in Jackson County.

Although he criticized much of what Missouri Mormons practiced, Pixley particularly disliked the Mormon doctrine of inheritances and laws of consecration and stewardship given to Smith in a February 9, 1831, revelation and practiced by the Saints in Jackson County. This revelation encouraged Mormons to sign over property to the Mormon Church by declaring, “Behold thou shalt consecrate all thy properties that which thou hast unto me with a covenant and Deed which cannot be broken & they Shall be laid before the Bishop of my church.” For Mormons, the revelation provided guidance for how to care for the entirety of the Mormon faithful, even though many lacked financial stability. The stewardship laws allowed for a pooling of resources and then distributing what was needed to all within the Church. However, communal property would have clashed with the emphases on private property and individualism popular to many Missourians, especially Jacksonian Democrats, at the time. In addition, Pixley failed to see how Mormons were better off materially with these laws, and he suspected they were a way to trap members into the Mormon faith. He reported, “Twenty acres is the portion assigned for each family to use and improve while they continue members of the society; but if they leave they are to go out empty.”¹² Pixley also claimed, “The idea of equality is held forth; but time will show that some take deeds of property in their own name, and those too of the most zealous and forward in the cause and prosperity of the society.” In addition to these criticisms, Pixley suspected some members of the Church hid some of their assets instead of giving everything over to their religious leadership. He argued,

¹² Mortenson, *Among the Mormons*, p. 75.

“perhaps they do not pretend...to have given all to the society.” He predicted that the Mormon community in Jackson County would not last based on religiously prescribed communalism. Instead, he expected the sect to “be scattered and brought to nought” in a timely fashion.

In his November 1833 letter, Pixley communicated other irritations to Missourians by the Mormons. He listed the number of Mormon emigrants into the county, attempts to take possession of land and property, and perceived invitations to “free Negroes from all parts of the country to come and join” the Mormons in Jackson County.¹³ He argued, “All these things taken together, aroused so much indignation in the minds of the inhabitants, that they assembled last summer...with deliberate purpose, and pulled down the printing office.” With the *Evening and Morning Star* office destroyed in July 1833, the Missourians then attempted to attack a Mormon owned store, but the two sides reached an agreement and opted to stop fighting. Pixley indicated the peace lasted until early November when Missourians became aware that Mormons planned to break the agreement and were “arming themselves, and threatened to kill if they should be molested.” His letter insinuated the onus for reigniting violence was on the Mormons, but he admitted Missourians engaged in “wild and ungovernable behavior,” including breaking into Mormon houses and destroying property. Whether or not Missourians believed their actions were justified, Jackson County Mormons suffered at the hands of their neighbors.

Besides the economic and social conditions of Missouri Saints, the overall religious nature of the Mormons frustrated Pixley and convinced him the religious sect

¹³ Mortenson, *Among the Mormons*, p. 82.

posed a problem for Missourians. In an 1831 letter published in the *Missouri Intelligencer*, Pixley claimed Mormon leaders engaged in such questionable activities as “persist[ance] in their power to work miracles, casting out devils, and healing the lame.”¹⁴ Mormon assertions they had recovered “the Ark of the Covenant, Aaron’s Rod, the Pot of Manna” and Smith’s possession of the “keys to the kingdom of heaven” and knowledge of the angels’ actions, also fueled his tirades against Mormons.¹⁵ In his 1832 letter, Pixley reported, “They declare there can be no true church where the gift of miracles, of tongues, of heading, &c. are not exhibited and continued. Several of them, however, have died, yet none have been raised from the dead. And the sick, unhappily, seem not to have faith to be healed of their diseases.”¹⁶ He related the story of “One woman...declared in her sickness, with much confidence, that she should not die, but here live and reign with Christ a thousand years; but unfortunately she died, like other people, three days after.” As Baptists and other Protestant denominations sought acceptance by rejecting experiential religion, the Missouri Mormons embraced enthusiastic components of their faith. For Pixley, then, aspects of experiential religion in the Mormon sect played a significant role in the reasons for his refutation of Mormons in Jackson County.

As a missionary for the Baptist denomination, Pixley also observed the religious background of the Missourian Saints and sneered at their pedigree. Although there was little in his public letters that defined what he personally believed, his employment as a

¹⁴ *Missouri Intelligencer*, September 17, 1831, 3-1.

¹⁵ *Missouri Intelligencer*, September 17, 1831, 3-1.

¹⁶ Mortenson, *Among the Mormons*, p. 73.

Baptist missionary hinted at his loyalty to the denomination. Annoyed with the relative newness of the Mormon faith and the religious background of many converts, Pixley pointed out the fluidity of religious conviction—one he apparently found ridiculous in the Mormons. In 1832, he wrote, “Of the Mormons as a sect...they seem to be made up of people of every sect and kind, Shakers, Baptists, Methodists, Presbyterians and Campbellites, and some have been of two or three of these different sects before they became Mormonites.”¹⁷ In 1833, he observed the insular nature of the Missouri Saints by writing, “Originally members of almost every sect, they cordially unite in detesting all save Mormons.”¹⁸ He insisted Mormonism only succeeded because the faith was “introduced by a few illiterate disciples of Joseph Smith, in the summer of 1831, a time when religious excitements were the order of the day.”¹⁹ He contended, “The timid were frightened, the credulous believed, and we were frequently eye witness to the scenes of strange & unnatural conduct of Mormons professedly under the influence of the Spirit, that staggered the disbelief of the most stable and incredulous.” He also noted that since the inception of the Church, “they have no fellowship for Temperance societies, Bible societies, Tract societies, or Sunday school societies.”²⁰ Whether frustrated by the basic character of the religious sect or the religious actors themselves, Pixley believed the Mormons Church and converts inferior to his own faith and that of other more established Protestant groups.

¹⁷ Mortenson, *Among the Mormons*, p. 74.

¹⁸ *Missouri Intelligencer*, April 13, 1833, 1-3.

¹⁹ *Missouri Intelligencer*, April 13, 1833, 1-3.

²⁰ Mortenson, *Among the Mormons*, p. 74.

Despite his misgivings and disapproval of the Missouri Saints, Pixley was aware of important aspects within the Mormon faith; in particular, the significance of Zion building in Missouri. In his 1832 letter, he revealed he lived “on the very land which they sometimes call Mount Zion, at other times the New Jerusalem—and where, at no distant period, they expect the reappearing of the Lord Jesus to live and reign with them on earth a thousand years.”²¹ His proximity to the religious group allowed him to hear some of their preaching, including “a most labored discourse, its object was to prove that this place, here fixed upon by the Mormons as their location, is the very Mount Zion so often mentioned in Scripture.”²² Pixley thought any who believed so were incorrect. He argued, “People, therefore, who set their faces for the Mount Zion of the West (which by the by is on a site of ground not much elevated), must calculate on being disappointed, if they believe all that is said of the place, or expect much above what is common in any new country of the West.”²³ For Pixley, the Mormon land of promise must have been must less impressive. Instead of a sacred space, Jackson County was Pixley’s workplace.

Despite Missourians’ frustration with their Mormon neighbors up to the summer of 1833, both the *Evening and Morning Star* and reports in Missouri newspapers demonstrated the resolve of the Church to remain in Missouri notwithstanding tensions with their neighbors. While the two sides grew increasingly more separated and unable to compromise on religious views, Pixley maintained, “the storm passed—a calm followed—reason triumphed, and Mormonism waned.”²⁴ Unfortunately, it was only a

²¹ Mortenson, *Among the Mormons*, p. 73.

²² Mortenson, *Among the Mormons*, p. 74.

²³ Mortenson, *Among the Mormons*, p. 74.

²⁴ *Missouri Intelligencer*, April 13, 1833, 1-3.

few months after this observation that violence broke out in Jackson County. Perhaps part of the cause of mob action against the Saints was persistence in Mormon religious beliefs. Pixley wrote in April 1833, “Their creed appears to have undergone but little change. The Mormons still prefer to talk with angels, visit the third heaven, and converse with Christ face to face.”²⁵ The year prior, he argued, “The very materials of which the society is composed must at length produce an explosion.”²⁶ He claimed Mormons promoted “false Christs and false Prophets, showing signs and wonders so as to deceive.” In November 1833, Pixley decried a “pretended” revelation that encouraged Mormons “*to arise and pursue and destroy their enemies.*”²⁷ The language Pixley used to describe the Mormons demonstrated his derision and dismissal of the religion compared to his own. To him, Mormonism represented a fake or false religion that allowed for him to reject the group as inherently inferior and illegitimate.²⁸

A minister of the Cumberland Presbyterian Church, Finis Ewing most likely did not actively participate in the initial violent persecution of the Saints in 1833, but he spoke against them throughout the decade. Born in Bedford County, Virginia, in 1773, Ewing became a Presbyterian minister in 1803 after marrying Peggy Davidson and settling near Nashville, Tennessee, a decade prior. In 1810, he and two other ministers formed the Cumberland Presbyterian Church, a denomination that emerged along the western frontier out of the religious revivals of the Second Great Awakening and

²⁵ *Missouri Intelligencer*, April 13, 1833, 1-3.

²⁶ Mortenson, *Among the Mormons*, p. 75.

²⁷ Mortenson, *Among the Mormons*, p. 83.

²⁸ Fluhman, “*A Peculiar People*,” pp. 17-18.

accepted relaxed training and educational requirements for ministers.²⁹ Like McCoy, Ewing had connections to Native Americans during the Era of Good Feelings. He served as chaplain to a Kentucky expeditionary force led by General Samuel Hopkins who fought Native Americans near Vincennes, Indiana, during the War of 1812.³⁰ However, McCoy's favorable opinion of American Indians was not shared by Ewing who called them "cowardly savages."³¹ Ewing pursued theological advancements during the War of 1812 as well. In 1814, he helped create the Confession of Faith for the Cumberland Presbyterian Church, which established rules of order and the basic beliefs of the new denomination. Ewing moved to Kentucky in 1820 and then to a location near Boonville, Missouri, in Cooper County that same year along with many other Kentucky and Tennessee residents who helped settle western Missouri following statehood in 1821.

As a founding member of a denomination during the Second Great Awakening, Ewing's beliefs and opinions on theology and the state of religion in the developing nation were definite, numerous, and published copiously by the Cumberland Presbyterian Church so they could be disseminated across the western frontier. Not surprisingly, many of his beliefs differed from those of early Mormon theology. For example, Ewing would have rejected both the Book of Mormon and continuing revelations from God that defined the early years of the Mormon faith in Missouri.³² Ewing did not dismiss

²⁹ Noll, *America's God*, pp. 254-258, 262-264.

³⁰ Samuel Miller, 1789-1858, Pioneer, Patriot, Inheritor and Veteran of the War of 1812, A Commentary Address by Wilbur Morse Shankland, A.M., Ed. D., Miller's Creek Methodist Church, Callaway County, Missouri, 1970 in Missouri East Conference, United Methodist Church, Papers, 1850-1977, Western Historical Manuscripts, Columbia, MO, C3595, folder 292.

³¹ Cossit, *The Life and Times of Rev. Finis Ewing*, p. 9.

³² Cossit, *The Life and Times of Rev. Finis Ewing*, p. 146.

revelations entirely as he firmly believed the Bible was a “divine revelation.”³³ However, Smith’s revelations proved problematic because they expanded upon religious beliefs Ewing considered already set. In 1827, Ewing declared, “While on the subject of faith... [there has] been much speculation and incongruity in the Christian world concerning it. Some alleging, since the canon of revelation is completed, there is nothing wanting but the sinner to *will* to believe, which he supposes entirely in his power.”³⁴ Ewing was “strictly speaking, a Calvinist, but of a moderate grade, more zealous to teach his people the plan of salvation than the subtleties of a favorite system.”³⁵ As such, he believed in predestination, infant baptism, and the total depravity of humans whose actions had no bearing on their state of salvation.³⁶

Like McCoy, Ewing adamantly insisted his primary concern during the 1830s was his career in religious leadership. He offered the opinion, “God could not permit a greater curse to come on a people than a christless minister,” a reference he credited to the Great Awakening minister George Whitefield.³⁷ Therefore, he worked tirelessly to expose what he considered false or heretical belief systems both within and outside the Presbyterian denomination. During the revivals of the Second Great Awakening of the early 1800s, Ewing denounced Presbyterian New Lights who he felt corrupted the denomination when they “argued that Jesus Christ possessed only a super-angelic nature

³³ Cossit, *The Life and Times of Rev. Finis Ewing*, p. 83.

³⁴ Finis Ewing, *A Series of Lectures, On the Most Important Subjects of Divinity*, (Fayetteville, TN: Printed for the Cumberland Presbyterian Synod by E. and J. B. Hill, 1827), pp. 59-60.

³⁵ Cossit, *The Life and Times of Rev. Finis Ewing*, p. 16.

³⁶ Cossit, *The Life and Times of Rev. Finis Ewing*, pp. 130, 180-181.

³⁷ Ewing, *A Series of Lectures*, p. 144.

and a delegated power”—beliefs he thought “destroy[ed] the foundation of the Christian’s hope.”³⁸ During that same religious crisis for Presbyterians, adherents who feared being driven out of their denomination considered joining the Methodists but “could not adopt Arminian sentiments” or the Baptists, who mostly supported adult baptism and were “not then remarkably intelligent.”³⁹ His opinion about Baptists did not improve over time as evidenced by a letter he wrote in 1819 to fellow Cumberland Presbyterian minister Robert Donnell. In it, he discussed plans for removal to Missouri but worried “tobacco makers and Baptists will take this part of the country. Though I would not speak disparagingly, I have no particular partiality for either.”⁴⁰ In 1836, Ewing expressed his belief that a schism within the Baptist denomination led to the development of the Campbellites or Disciples of Christ. He believed, “the converts from the old Baptist Church to the new theories of Campbell have swarmed into the country by the thousand, and have contributed very greatly to retard the spread of the gospel doctrine of repentance, faith, and regeneration.”⁴¹ Mormon leader Sidney Rigdon’s roots as a Campbellite would not have made Ewing more accepting of the religious sect.

Despite his dislike of other denominations, Ewing’s opinions of the character of Missouri residents was mostly positive, which differed significantly from both Mormon leadership and Isaac McCoy. The men and women of Missouri were not “the rough,

³⁸ Cossit, *The Life and Times of Rev. Finis Ewing*, p. 116.

³⁹ Cossit, *The Life and Times of Rev. Finis Ewing*, p. 39.

⁴⁰ Cossit, *The Life and Times of Rev. Finis Ewing*, p. 121.

⁴¹ *Aunt Peggy: Being a Memoir of Mrs. Margaret Davidson Ewing, Wife of the Late Rev. Finis Ewing, by One of Her Sons*, (Nashville: Cumberland Presbyterian Publishing House, 1876), p. 147.

lawless characters” McCoy and many of the Mormon leadership reviled.⁴² Instead, “most of the first emigrants which reached this part of the state were men of excellent character, who had large and growing families, and sought a new country to get cheap lands, and thus contribute to the advantageous settlement of their children in life.”⁴³ Whether Ewing actually held members of his congregation and other citizens of western Missouri in such a high regard or not, his favorable opinion of Missourians did not extend to the Mormons who had recently moved to Jackson County. His opinion set him apart from other leaders of the Missouri mob, demonstrating that Missourians acted for a variety of reasons as they persecuted the Church of Christ—including religious convictions.

Ewing moved from Cooper to Lafayette County in 1832 while Jackson County Mormons lived in relative peace with their Missouri neighbors. Although there are no direct references to the religious sect in his writings, Smith and other Mormon leaders claimed Ewing was instrumental in the persecution of Saints in November 1833. Ewing made no secret of his distaste for the Saints during the conflict in Jackson County. Although the original source no longer exists, Mormon sources indicated Ewing published writings revealing his thoughts on the group. He was accused by Mormons of circulating a pamphlet decrying Mormons as “common enemies of mankind” who “ought to be destroyed.”⁴⁴ Besides the pamphlet, Ewing apparently wrote two letters to Governor Dunklin regarding the “Mormon difficulty with the citizens of Jackson

⁴² *Aunt Peggy*, p. 126.

⁴³ *Aunt Peggy*, p. 127.

⁴⁴ Roberts, *History of the Church, Volume 1*, p. 393.

County” in December 1833 and the first half of 1834.⁴⁵ Dunklin assured Ewing that he had not been “deceived in the evidence” regarding the facts of the events in Jackson County. Lacking Ewing’s letters, the governor’s written response to the minister indicated how influential the religious leader was in Missouri during the Jackson County conflicts. Because Ewing lived in Lafayette County at the time of the clashes in Jackson County, he was likely one of the citizens from Lafayette County who protested the presence of Zion’s Camp in Clay County in July 1834.

While many Missourians in Jackson County and the surrounding areas came from southern backgrounds and supported the system of slavery, Ewing disagreed with that position. Although he owned slaves, “Mr. Ewing believed it was wrong for him to hold slaves, and had determined to provide for their emancipation at an early day.”⁴⁶ Most likely, Ewing subscribed to the anti-slavery position rather than agreeing with abolition since Cossitt recorded the minister’s belief that colonization provided the best solution for a way to deal with freed slaves and free blacks.⁴⁷ When the July 1833 article “Free People of Color” drew ire from residents of Jackson County, Ewing’s position that slavery should end likely divided him from the larger populace, especially other civic and religious leaders who were listed in the declarations against the Mormons. Missourians viewed the published piece as evidence of Mormons’ “corrupting influence on our slaves” and “an indirect invitation to the free brethren of color in Illinoise [sic] to come

⁴⁵ Finis Ewing Papers, Letter from Governor Daniel Dunklin, June 9, 1834, L. Tom Perry Special Collections, Brigham Young University, Folder 3.

⁴⁶ *Aunt Peggy*, p. 117.

⁴⁷ Cossitt, *The Life and Times of Rev. Finis Ewing*, p. 128.

up like the rest to the land of Zion.”⁴⁸ Because most Mormons migrated from northern states and areas of southern Canada and largely voted Whig instead of Democratic, many Missourians assumed Mormons intended to threaten the state of slavery in Missouri and eventually end the practice altogether.⁴⁹ However, Ewing’s position on slavery would have put him on the same side of the issue as most members of the Church of Christ when the article was published, giving more credence to religion as a determining factor for why the Presbyterian minister distrusted members of the Mormon faith.

Ewing’s friendship with President Jackson resulted in his appointment as a Register of the Land Office in 1836. He moved from rural Lafayette County to the town of Lexington, the county seat, to take the job. Despite his call to ministry, “he never received any compensation for his long and laborious services in the ministry; that he worked for nothing, and supported himself.”⁵⁰ Cossitt argued Ewing’s work at the Land Office was mostly completed by an assistant, so that the minister could continue his work as a religious leader. However, a letter dated November 22, 1836, from Ewing to Abiel Leonard, a citizen of Fayette, Missouri, indicated some of the work that was part of his job as Register. In the letter, Ewing attempted to clarify the date of a land sale and insisted he must be present during the sale. He asked, “Who has made the mistake in the time—yourself or the Sheriff? If it be the Sheriff there will be a great baulk of people will attend on the wrong day. If it be he that has made the mistake, I would respectfully

⁴⁸ *Missouri Intelligencer*, August 10, 1833, 2-2.

⁴⁹ McCandless, *A History of Missouri*, pp. 92-126.

⁵⁰ Cossitt, *The Life and Times of Rev. Finis Ewing*, p. 131.

urge you to write to him immediately on the subject.”⁵¹ Regardless of how much work Ewing actually completed himself, his combined position as a minister in the Cumberland Presbyterian Church coupled with his work with the Land Office increased his influence and reputation in both religious and civic duties. With such a powerful man working against the cause of the Saints, no wonder Mormons believed they were the target of persecution.

Ewing still worked for the Land Office in July 1838 when he received a letter from Lilburn Boggs, former Lieutenant Governor of Missouri during the Jackson County conflict who served as governor following Daniel Dunklin. Boggs informed Ewing he was sending William Harris, a Virginia resident, to Ewing so that the visitor could “examine the lands.” Boggs urged Ewing to introduce Harris to Missouri residents and “give him aid” during his journey. The governor seemed assured Ewing would treat Harris well, since he was a “a good Democrat, which I suppose will do him no injury in your examination.”⁵² Even if Ewing had been upset with Harris’ political beliefs, Ewing was “not one of those who feel like breaking an old strong friendship for an honest difference of opinion—in matters which so much divide our nation,” according to a letter he wrote to Col. Ben. H. Reeves in March 1838.⁵³ Yet, Ewing’s political beliefs were strong. In a post script to the same letter, he included the clarification, “to prevent miss apprehension, I will just state, that my confidence is unimpaired towards W. Clay, and that nothing, of which I can now conceive, could induce me to for sake him, if he

⁵¹ Abiel Leonard Papers, Letter from Finis Ewing to Benjamin Reeves, March 6, 1838, Western Historical Manuscripts, University of Missouri-Columbia, C1013, folder 101, page 1.

⁵² Lilburn Boggs Papers, Letter to Finis Ewing, July 12, 1838, L. Tom Perry Special Collections, Brigham Young University, C 724, p. 6.

⁵³ Abiel Leonard Papers, C1013, Folder 43, p. 1.

continue his former policy.” Only a change in land policies could sway Ewing’s opinions as evidenced by the last line in his exchange with Reeves. The Land Office employee wrote, “I would drop W. Clay or the nearest friend I have on Earth as a politician” if he supported “radical change in our Land system.”⁵⁴ As a staunch Democrat, friend of President Jackson, supporter of Henry Clay, Land Agent, and minister, Ewing wielded significant political and religious power in Lafayette County and western Missouri during the 1830s.

Even with his job, Ewing’s focus on his religious duties remained paramount during his lifetime. Shortly after he moved to Lafayette County, most likely during the summer of 1833, a “great camp-meeting” took place on the grounds of the Old Brick Church, the congregation where Ewing ministered.⁵⁵ Similar to the meetings that launched the organization of the Cumberland Presbyterian Church in Tennessee, this religious revival resulted in “converts...numbered by scores, the Church...greatly strengthened, and a permanent and powerful influence for good was established in the community.”⁵⁶ Ewing also wrote to Colonel Reeves of other revivals that took place in Kentucky, Georgia, and other states during the 1830s. He spoke of his elation after receiving correspondence from an acquaintance in Georgia, “it is a rare thing to see an attorney who does not belong to some Church! And that in one or two judicial Districts, the Judges and all the Barr are religious!! And that in such Districts the Court is opened by prayer, by the Judge or some member present!!!”⁵⁷ Ewing delighted in the spread of

⁵⁴ Abiel Leonard Papers, C1013, Folder 43, p. 3.

⁵⁵ *Aunt Peggy*, p. 131.

⁵⁶ *Aunt Peggy*, pp. 132-133.

⁵⁷ Abiel Leonard Papers, C1013, Folder 43, p. 2.

the Presbyterian faith, at the same time he loathed the growth of denominations and sects with which he disagreed.

Although Ewing disapproved of Mormons and their beliefs, he left evidence that some of his religious beliefs were similar to those in the Church of Christ. Despite his reputation and influential position, Ewing still felt the sting of persecution when he lived in Missouri. During his time in Cooper County, “the little band” of Presbyterians “was persecuted without stint, was despised and maligned, and was often discouraged and driven back.”⁵⁸ Yet, Ewing believed persecution could be good for the growth of a religious faith and that adherents should not attempt to avoid it. He argued, “Pious hearts will always sympathize with men suffering persecution for righteousness sake,” which could lead to converts.⁵⁹ However, Ewing believed, “the oppressor is more to be pitied than the oppressed; the tyrant who kindles the fire more than the fire who burns.”⁶⁰ Since Mormons named Ewing as one of the leaders of the persecution against Mormons in western Missouri during the 1830s, his own words about the persecution of the Cumberland Presbyterians demonstrated his understanding of the impact of discrimination on religious groups. As a result, Ewing and other ministers potentially and unintentionally contributed to the growth of the Mormon faith in Missouri.

Besides persecution, Ewing also shared a belief in the importance of Zion and millennialism with the Mormon Church. During his time in Tennessee, he wrote several letters to fellow ministers regarding the state of religion and the work of the Cumberland

⁵⁸ *Aunt Peggy*, p. 86.

⁵⁹ Finis Ewing, *Review of Davidson*, in Cossitt, *The Life and Times of Rev. Finis Ewing*, p. 214.

⁶⁰ Finis Ewing, *Review of Davidson*, in Cossitt, *The Life and Times of Rev. Finis Ewing*, p. 215.

Presbyterian Church. In those missives, he voiced, “I cannot help thinking the latter-day glory is dawning,” most likely because of growth in his own denomination and an increase in religious adherence during the Second Great Awakening.⁶¹ He admitted to his friend that he “felt the most acute pains and uncommon anxiety for Zion” and petitioned God to “give Zion purity and pangs.”⁶² Ewing’s Zion surely differed from that of the Mormons who depended on a literal and physical gathering of the Saints as a priority in Zion building. Ewing’s references to Zion likely focused on a surge in religious activity and the need for more ministers in the Cumberland Presbyterian denomination to minister to the increased number of religious converts during the Second Great Awakening. He wrote in another letter, “Give my love to my brethren. Tell them to take on Zion’s pangs, to travail in birth, to take no denial, till God works wonders [wonders].”⁶³ Like the Mormon Saints, Ewing professed millennialism and an emphasis on Zion, but the commonalities were not enough to overcome Ewing’s animosity towards the Mormon Church.

Three years after the Saints were expelled from Jackson County, Ewing wrote a letter from Lexington, Missouri, to a family member in Santa Fe expressing his continued unease with members of the Mormon faith. He wrote, “There is a report in circulation that the Mormons are coming on from Ohio in great numbers determined to take Jackson County. I was at Independence last week and found the people preparing for the war.

⁶¹ Finis Ewing, *Review of Davidson*, in Cossitt, *The Life and Times of Rev. Finis Ewing*, p. 106.

⁶² Finis Ewing, *Review of Davidson*, in Cossitt, *The Life and Times of Rev. Finis Ewing*, pp. 105-106.

⁶³ Finis Ewing, *Review of Davidson*, in Cossitt, *The Life and Times of Rev. Finis Ewing*, p. 102.

They are determined the Mormons shall not come among them.”⁶⁴ Dated May 17, 1836, the letter was written near the time Smith declared Zion would be redeemed and the Ohio Church’s leadership would move to Missouri. In preparation for the invasion of Ohio Mormons, the Missourians acquired three cannons and organized military companies under the leadership of influential Missourians. Ewing informed his friend, “Lucas commands one company. Kavanaugh another.” Most likely, Lucas referred to Samuel D. Lucas, a court justice and member of the Presbyterian Church who was the secretary of a citizens’ council denouncing Mormon settlement of Jackson County in July 1833.⁶⁵ He later served as Major General in the Missouri militia during the 1838 conflict in Caldwell County and marched on the Mormons at Far West, Missouri. Archibald Kavanaugh, a resident of Cooper County and the son-in-law of Finis Ewing, was a member of the Cumberland Presbyterian Church, a justice on the Cooper County court, and a member of the Missouri state legislature throughout most of the 1830s.⁶⁶ Ewing likely enjoyed religious, political, and personal connections with Lucas and Kavanaugh that were expressed through their disapproval of Mormon resolve to reclaim Jackson County as their Zion.

Besides Ewing, Peter Hardeman Burnett provided warnings to the citizens of Clay County about the arrival of Mormons in northwest Missouri in the mid-1830s. Although significantly younger than both Ewing and Pixley, Burnett also wielded considerable

⁶⁴ Finis Ewing Papers, Letter to W. F. Ewing, May 17, 1836, L. Tom Perry Special Collections, Brigham Young University, C1396, folder 5, page 4.

⁶⁵ *Evening and Morning Star*, December 1833, 2-2.

⁶⁶ Buel Leopard and Floyd Shoemaker, editors, *The Messages and Proclamations of the Governors of the State of Missouri, Volume I*, (Columbia: The State Historical Society of Missouri, 1922), p. 201, and W. F. Johnson, *History of Cooper County, Missouri*, (Topeka, KS: Historical Publishing Company, 1919), p. 232.

power in Clay County during the time following Mormon expulsion from Jackson County. Born in Nashville, Tennessee, in 1807, Burnett moved to Missouri with his family during his teenage years before returning to Tennessee where he worked throughout his early twenties.⁶⁷ While living in Hardeman County, Tennessee, he met and married his wife before moving back to Clay County, Missouri, in April 1832, at age 25.⁶⁸ Despite his proximity to the conflict from a neighboring county, Burnett barely discussed the 1833 troubles in his memoirs. Instead, his attention centered on the growth of his family and his career as a lawyer, which was rewarded when he was hired by Mormon elders in 1838 to help represent Smith and other religious leaders.

Burnett's religious experience varied over his lifetime and included identifying as a Deist, Disciple of Christ, and Catholic. His family was "much divided in religion," with siblings who were Disciples of Christ, Methodist, and Baptist and two brothers who served as ministers in their respective denominations.⁶⁹ His wife was a Methodist who was "never noisy, fanatical, or wildly enthusiastic in her religious feelings; but she was very firm." Burnett credited his marriage to her at age 21 as the reason he kept from falling into "vicious habits" and immoral behavior.⁷⁰ Burnett identified as a Deist through his thirties because of his interest in and training as a lawyer. He argued, "most of our lawyers...were not religious, and would naturally be partial to a man like themselves," referring to the men with whom he worked in Clay and Platte counties until

⁶⁷ Peter H. Burnett, *Recollections and Opinions of an Old Pioneer*, (New York: D. Appleton and Company, 1880), pp. 1, 53.

⁶⁸ Burnett, *Recollections and Opinions of an Old Pioneer*, pp. 32-33.

⁶⁹ Burnett, *Recollections and Opinions of an Old Pioneer*, pp. 5-6.

⁷⁰ Burnett, *Recollections and Opinions of an Old Pioneer*, p. 36.

he moved to Oregon in the mid-1840s.⁷¹ Of the men who were political leaders, lawyers, or judges who worked to expel Mormons or restrict their behavior during the 1830s, Burnett claimed, “only one...believed Christianity to be true, and that was Amos Rees,” who informed the Mormons in 1834 that further attempts to reclaim their lands in Jackson County would not result in recovered property. Burnett contended his lack of religious interest early in life resulted from his focus on the law because “logical minds are not prone to take a theory as true without proof; and the proofs of Christianity, though complete and conclusive to a moral certainty, yet require time and careful investigation to be able to understand them in their full and combined force.”⁷² Burnett converted to become a member of the Disciples of Christ in 1840 when he was 33, a year after the expulsion of Mormons from Missouri.⁷³

Although Burnett was not a minister or missionary, he did exert significant political power during his life in Clay County and other areas in northwest Missouri. Like McCoy and Ewing, family and personal connections in Tennessee connected him to important political and judicial leaders. His maternal grandfather was a “neighbor and warm friend of General Andrew Jackson” who fought against Native Americans as Tennessee was settled and was a member of the first Constitutional Convention in Tennessee.⁷⁴ His Hardeman ancestors were affluent and enjoyed material possessions, but the Burnetts struggled financially as pioneers in Tennessee, Missouri, Oregon, and California. Burnett’s grandfather identified three guides for living for his children and

⁷¹ Burnett, *Recollections and Opinions of an Old Pioneer*, p. 81.

⁷² Burnett, *Recollections and Opinions of an Old Pioneer*, p. 86.

⁷³ Burnett, *Recollections and Opinions of an Old Pioneer*, p. 94.

⁷⁴ Burnett, *Recollections and Opinions of an Old Pioneer*, p. 1.

grandchildren, which Burnett attempted to keep—“pay your honest debts...never disgrace the family...help the honest and industrious kin.”⁷⁵ Consequently, he learned to value hard work and pay his debts while also recognizing the importance of education and expanding his mind. During the late 1820s in Tennessee, he worked first in a hotel where he met such men as Sam Houston and Davy Crockett.⁷⁶ At his next job in Hardeman County, Tennessee, he worked to collect debt payments and sell merchandise for a Methodist man named Parson Peck, who owned a general credit business. One of his employer’s brothers served on the Supreme Court of Tennessee and another served on the United States District Court in Missouri before he died in 1836.⁷⁷ Although Burnett lacked a formal education, he bought law books and studied independently until he found gainful employment as a lawyer, which led to his position as a District Attorney in northwest Missouri and eventually the first governor of California. During his time in Missouri, he served under both David Atchison and Alexander Doniphan, both of whom were lawyers and members of the court and participants in the Mormon conflicts in 1838. Throughout his life, Burnett interacted with and benefitted from his friendships, working relationships, and contact with politically powerful men who helped shape his own career.

While Burnett’s specific religious beliefs played a minor role in his interaction with the Mormon Church, he equated his morality and, to some extent his political beliefs, with his upbringing and his relationship with his religious wife. In 1818 or 1819

⁷⁵ Burnett, *Recollections and Opinions of an Old Pioneer*, p. 2.

⁷⁶ Burnett, *Recollections and Opinions of an Old Pioneer*, pp. 27-29.

⁷⁷ Burnett, *Recollections and Opinions of an Old Pioneer*, p. 29.

while living in Howard County, Missouri, his family owned a small number of slaves because he wrote, “all the family lived together in the same room, the whites on one side and the blacks on the other.”⁷⁸ Burnett also wrote about hunting for honey in Indian Territory with his father and a slave a few years after moving to Clay County in 1822. As an adult, Burnett chose not to own slaves and believed slavery was a detriment to the nation. He claimed, “For years I had been opposed to slavery, as injurious to both races. While I resided in Tennessee and Missouri, there was no discussion upon the subject of manumitting the slaves in those States.”⁷⁹ During his time in Oregon and California, he fought against the expansion of slavery into the territories and insisted he would have done more if he had foreseen the results of the Civil War.⁸⁰ Burnett’s views on slavery combined with his lack of religious affiliation during the 1830s could have factored significantly into his relative acceptance of the Mormon Church and its leaders throughout the Missouri conflicts. While many Missouri citizens and religious leaders condemned the Saints for the “Free People of Color,” Burnett agreed with those anti-slavery views.

Like McCoy and other influential Missourians, Burnett identified politically as a Jacksonian Democrat during his time in Missouri and Tennessee, although many in his family were Whigs. He credited a paper he read in St. Louis when he was a teenager as the reason for his political beliefs, but his views changed later in life to align with those of Alexander Hamilton.⁸¹ He argued that republicanism and the American system were

⁷⁸ Burnett, *Recollections and Opinions of an Old Pioneer*, p. 7.

⁷⁹ Burnett, *Recollections and Opinions of an Old Pioneer*, p. 221.

⁸⁰ Burnett, *Recollections and Opinions of an Old Pioneer*, p. 220.

⁸¹ Burnett, *Recollections and Opinions of an Old Pioneer*, p. 87.

“the best form of government for the greatest number” when the citizenry was young, industrious, and had access to plenty of land. However, when the “population becomes dense, dependent, and suffering, and for that reason more corrupt,” he feared the system would “politically demoralize” the nation.⁸² Regardless of party, Burnett purported following the rule of law and worked tirelessly to uphold the Constitution and other legal documents, claiming the country would revert to barbarism if laws were dismissed. Accordingly, he opposed mob action in northwest Missouri “as destructive of all legitimate government, and as the worst form of *irresponsible* tyranny.”⁸³ He feared Missouri mobs would lynch Mormons living in Clay, Caldwell, and Daviess counties without allowing for the proper course of justice. He also agreed with Alexander Doniphan’s refusal to allow Smith, Rigdon, and other Mormon Church leaders to be court martialed and hanged after their surrender at Far West in 1838. Burnett believed so strongly in following the law that he and Doniphan “determined inflexibly to do our duty to our clients at all hazards, and to sell our lives as dearly as possible if necessary.” In fact, Burnett believed providing Smith and other Church leaders with justice and fair legal representation was a “sacred duty to perform.”⁸⁴ Smith’s encouragement to the Saints to work within the court system would have appealed to Burnett’s sense of justice and right and wrong, even if, as a Deist at the time, he disagreed with the Mormon faith.

Although Burnett’s memoir omitted personal opinions of the Mormon religion itself, he did record his observations of the founder of the Mormon Church. He recalled

⁸² Burnett, *Recollections and Opinions of an Old Pioneer*, p. 88.

⁸³ Burnett, *Recollections and Opinions of an Old Pioneer*, p. 54.

⁸⁴ Burnett, *Recollections and Opinions of an Old Pioneer*, p. 55.

the first time he saw Smith and claimed the religious leader was a man of “most intense excitement.”⁸⁵ Burnett described Smith as a tall man who was “an awkward but vehement speaker” who used too many words to express his ideas.⁸⁶ Yet, he was “more than an ordinary man. He possessed the most indomitable perseverance, was a good judge of men, and deemed himself born to command, and he did command.” Burnett claimed Smith held significant influence over those around him, could discuss subjects from many different perspectives, and possessed original views on numerous topics. Although less educated than Rigdon, Smith enjoyed “native intellect” and “determined will.” Smith also held views that were “so strange and striking, and his manner was so earnest, and apparently so candid, that you could not but be interested.” Burnett also related a story he had heard from others about Smith consenting to wrestle men from Daviess County who challenged him to a match, which Smith won handily. Smith clearly impressed Burnett as a leader who commanded an enormous amount of respect from those around him. In fact, Burnett gave no indication that he disliked or distrusted any of the Mormon leaders, including Lyman Wight, who Burnett considered the most military minded.

Burnett painted himself positively in his memoirs, bolstering his reputation as a fair and just lawyer, judge, and politician who defended others to the best of his ability and accepted those who believed differently from him. However, his actions and beliefs could also place him in a tenuous position with those around him. In the mid-1830s, Burnett edited a newspaper called *The Far West*, that was published in Liberty,

⁸⁵ Burnett, *Recollections and Opinions of an Old Pioneer*, p. 56.

⁸⁶ Burnett, *Recollections and Opinions of an Old Pioneer*, pp. 66-67.

Missouri.⁸⁷ The tagline for the circular, which read “Reason the Power, Truth the Weapon, and Our Country’s God, The End,” expressed values important to Burnett. Most of the volumes provide reports and observations on local, state, and national politics, including information about events in St. Louis and Columbia. In particular, much of the content in *The Far West* provided information about settling the West and the protection of settlers in frontier areas. Legislation from the East and opinions of influential men sprinkled the front pages of each volume and provided insight into how to overcome the harsh conditions in western Missouri as it developed.

Regardless of his relative acceptance of Mormons, two editions of his newspaper included articles that reflected negatively on the religious group. The first was published in the August 1836 edition and was in the form of a letter dated July 5, 1836, in Kirtland, Ohio. The author, who chose to remain anonymous for fear of recrimination, wrote the letter to distribute among newspaper editors in Missouri in the hopes that the citizens of the state would frustrate the plans of Mormons from the East as they migrated to Zion. He asked the editors to “shew the propriety of withholding names to any communications from this place [Ohio] concerning them [Mormons]” because “it might not be altogether convenient to have ones houses or barns burnt by them.”⁸⁸ He reported, “the public sentiment [in Ohio] appears to be taking the proper direction” of rejecting Mormonism and hindering the work of the Church due to the “atrocious conduct of the Mormons

⁸⁷ Burnett, *Recollections and Opinions of an Old Pioneer*, p. 53. Burnett wrote about his experience as a newspaper editor in Clay County in his memoirs. Although he did not indicate how long he held the position, only eight issues of *The Far West* remain. The last of these is volume 35, so it is reasonable to assume the paper was in circulation for approximately six months.

⁸⁸ *The Far West*, August 11, 1836, 1-2.

here.”⁸⁹ He encouraged the Missourians they “could rid your state of them if you could enlighten the People as it respects their [Mormon’s] true character and design.” The article indicated the township where the author lived was “completely over run” by the Kirtland Mormons who controlled less than 2000 acres of land but wielded enough influence to sway elections and influence politicians. The author feared the Mormons wanted “to have possession of the wealth of the world which they are to obtain by conquest...which they expect to acquire by their own exertions in the slaughter of those who do not belong to their number.”⁹⁰ The author worried, “we shall be obliged to arm in defence of our rights and liberties and in defence of our lives.” Although Smith’s journals and correspondence during 1836 showed his decision not to raise an army to retake Zion, the article provided evidence the Mormons’ neighbors feared a potential rebellion by the religious group resulting in destroyed property, violence, and possibly death.

In addition to stirring up fear of a Mormon insurrection, the author disparaged the character of Mormons throughout his letter. He claimed the Mormons were “fiends in human shape” and “deluded beings” as well as a curse on society.⁹¹ He argued, “their general character may be summoned up in these words, the indolent, the vicious, and the unprincipled.” He labeled them “the worst part of the population,” even going so far as to associate them unfavorably to “the inmates of the Ohio Penitentiary [who] are respectable as a body compared with them.” For the Mormons who ascribed to a moral

⁸⁹ *The Far West*, August 11, 1836, 1-3.

⁹⁰ *The Far West*, August 11, 1836, 1-2.

⁹¹ *The Far West*, August 11, 1836, 1-2.

code established by the Book of Mormon, revelations, and the Doctrine and Covenants, this unfavorable slander of their faith must have seemed unfair and an unmitigated misunderstanding of the morality they held dear.

Besides disparaging the moral fabric of Mormons, the author of the letter relegated members of the religious sect to a subhuman level by dehumanizing them. Besides calling them fiends in human form, the author also argued the Mormons were savages, who lacked understanding of a civilized society. Mormons were also a “scourge” and lived in Ohio in “immense swarms.” Labels that dehumanized the Mormons allowed for Missourians and other areas of persecution to view the religious sect as a problem that must be eradicated rather than a set of humans with desires, convictions, and beliefs of their own. Viewing Mormons as instruments of pestilence almost certainly contributed to the Extermination Order issued by Missouri Governor Boggs in October 1838 and the language used at the Haun’s Mill Massacre a few days later.⁹² During that skirmish, Missourians murdered 17 Mormons, two of whom were ten-year-old boys. Mormon witnesses claimed one Missouri man who killed a Mormon boy used the words, “Nits will make lice, and if he had lived he would have become a Mormon.”⁹³ The tendency of Mormon opponents to strip the religious group of their political identities radicalized into removing Mormon humanity and murdering them by November 1838.

⁹² Genocide studies of the twentieth and twenty-first centuries also shed light on the power of words to dehumanize and unwanted group of people in order to eliminate them. For example, Jews were often referred to as rats who must be exterminated in the 1930s. One of the best sources on genocide is Adam Jones, editor, *Evoking Genocide: Scholars and Activists Describe the Works that Shaped Their Lives*, (Key Publishing House, 2009) and Adam Jones, *Genocide: A Comprehensive Introduction*, (Rutledge, 2010).

⁹³ Spencer, *The Missouri Mormon Experience*, p. 106.

The second article Burnett's paper published about the Mormon difficulties included far fewer incendiary descriptions of the Mormons. Published on August 25, 1836, the article provided an account of a July 23, 1836, meeting of Ray County citizens under the supervision of James Holeman as chairman and Amos Rees as secretary. The meeting was held with the "purpose of taking into consideration the Mormon relations with the citizens of Ray county, and to have an expression of the sense and feeling of the people relative to the emigrating Mormons and their location and settlement in Ray county."⁹⁴ Written only a few weeks after the warning from Kirtland (which was published two weeks after the meeting in Ray County), Holeman insisted the Missourians had no intention of resorting to violence except as a last resort. Instead, the citizens needed to plan for the "crowds of Mormons and vagabonds settleing here and filling up the county." Whether the Missouri leader meant Mormons were vagabonds or that Mormon emigrants happened to arrive in Ray County at the same time other emigrants with insufficient financial means did was unclear, but Holeman's insinuation would have likely irritated any Mormons who heard or read the report.

John Corrill, who apostatized from the Church in 1839, represented the Mormons at the July 1836 meeting and provided an earnest and honest voice for the religious group. Following his decision to leave the Mormon faith, Corrill served in the Missouri state legislature and wrote a brief history of his experience in the Church. Despite his apostasy, Corrill argued Saints suffered at the hands of Missourians because of their religion. He stated, "in my opinion, the stories originated in hatred towards the Mormon religion and the fear entertained of their overrunning and ruling the county" during the

⁹⁴ *The Far West*, August 25, 1836, 1-2.

1833 conflict.⁹⁵ He claimed the same in 1836 when Missourians in Clay County attempted to expel the Saints. He wrote, “either because they hated our religion, or were afraid we would become a majority, or for some other cause,” the Missourians became increasingly agitated at the number of Mormon adherents who had moved to northwest Missouri by mid-decade.⁹⁶ Thus, “the Mormons began to prepare for self defence, until the more rational and sensible part of the citizens saw that it was coming to bloodshed and something must be done.” The July 23 meeting provided the opportunity to reduce tension between the two groups and remove the Saints to an area north of Ray County where the citizens agreed to allow Mormons to settle among them.

At the July 23 meeting, Rees read a document from the citizens of Clay County providing information about the new area where Mormons expected to settle. It explained, “The Mormons had in conjunction with a delegation from the citizens of Clay County gone in search of a location for their people and had fixed on the county North of Ray county from the waters of Shoal creek North to the boundary line of the state.”⁹⁷ When asked for clarification about the need for such a large area, Correll testified it was “for the purpose of procuring a resting place from persecution and to procure a home.” He promised Mormons would support the law and not break it if they were guaranteed an area where they could build their own society without fear of interference or harassment. Correll requested, “there might be an expression of the popular mind on the subject of their [Mormon] location there as early as possible.” Officially established in December

⁹⁵ Correll, *A Brief History of the Church*, p. 20.

⁹⁶ Correll, *A Brief History of the Church*, p. 26.

⁹⁷ *The Far West*, August 25, 1836, 1-2.

1836, Caldwell County was carved from the northern section of Ray County. Although it was smaller than Mormons hoped for, it did provide a place of refuge for a short time.

Throughout the mid-1830s, Missourians and Mormons struggled to decide how to live in proximity with each other despite different political, economic, and religious beliefs. Mormon leadership in Ohio insisted the Missouri Zion must be redeemed at the same time Church leadership and theology altered and grew to shift the Mormon faith away from other Protestant denominations. Missouri Saints attempted to follow directives from Smith in Ohio but were also supposed to rely on their own strengths and experiences to establish a thriving community in northwest Missouri—including removing from the designated location of Zion to an area where the Mormon faithful could live in peace. Missouri religious leaders Pixley and Ewing and political leaders Boggs, Dunklin, and Burnett attempted to appease the Missourians among whom they lived while still working within the law to protect Missouri interests. A combination of economic, political, and religious reasons drove the Missouri leaders in their actions with the Mormons. Although religion may not have been the only reason each of the Missourians worked against the Saints, Pixley, Ewing, and Burnett each indicated that the Mormon faith countered their own religious convictions and impacted the way they reacted to the Missouri Saints.

Chapter 5—Losing Zion

On September 30, 1838, Jamon Aldrich, a Mormon settler in northwest Missouri, penned a melancholy letter to his brother. He wrote, “We are about 19 hundred miles apart yet the same sun shines on you that does on me and the same God sees us both and will Bring us in to judgment for the deeds done in the body.”¹ Aldrich’s letter represented the first communication between the two brothers in over two years and implied that a rift existed—most likely resulting from a disagreement about the necessity of Mormon migration to Missouri. Still living in New Hampshire, Daniel Aldrich had written to an acquaintance of his brother Jamon’s. However, he had failed to directly contact his own family. Jamon urged his brother to “fill the longest sheet you can” with information about his situation and implored him to relocate to Missouri where the two could reacquaint.² While Jamon’s appeal for Daniel’s move to Missouri probably included a desire to live close to family, the unique link of Mormons to western Missouri and the gathering of Saints to the Missouri Zion also likely factored into Jamon’s urgings. Unbeknownst to Jamon, who happily described the beauty of his Missouri homestead and innocently commented on a militia force of 5,000 men in the surrounding area, the serenity of his life in Missouri almost certainly ended with the onset of violence between Mormons and Missouri neighbors in late 1838.

Following the dedication of the Kirtland Temple and the onset of the endowment in 1836, Smith and other Ohio Church leaders shifted their attention to recovering the Missouri Zion. This included raising money to purchase land in the counties surrounding

¹ Jamon Aldrich, Letter to Daniel Aldrich, September 30, 1838, Western Historical Manuscripts, University of Missouri-Columbia, C1446, p. 1.

² Aldrich, Letter to Daniel Aldrich, C1446, p. 2.

Jackson County and preparing for the removal to and gathering of the Saints from various parts of the United States and Canada to the Ohio and Missouri stakes.³ Missionaries served in New York, Canada, and Great Britain in order to grow the Church, and thousands of converts accepted the missionaries' teachings. Because of growing numbers, Smith and other leaders felt pressure to reestablish Zion, but returning to Jackson County was still not a viable option. While the creation of Caldwell County for settlement by the Saints in December 1836 provided a haven for those displaced from Jackson County in 1833, the sheer number of Saints flocking to northwest Missouri strained the willingness of Missourians to accept further migrations of the religious group and renewed persecution. At the same time Smith encouraged the Saints to gather to Zion, dissention within the Church and tension with their Ohio and Missouri neighbors escalated to create a tinderbox ripe for explosion by the fall of 1838.

The importance of Zion in antebellum Mormon theology impacted the entire Mormon experience in Missouri and continued long after the Saints were expelled from the state. Besides the 1833 revelations regarding Zion's location in Jackson County and the 1836 theological developments to include the establishment of Zion's stakes, Smith also recorded his convictions about Zion in documents published after the Missouri period that indicated the inherent nature of Zion building to early Mormonism. In "The Articles of Faith of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints," authored by Smith and published posthumously, he asserted, "Zion will be built upon this [the American] continent; that Christ will reign personally upon the earth; and, that the earth will be

³ Esplin, *The Joseph Smith Papers*, p. 226.

renewed and receive its paradisiacal glory.”⁴ In order to fulfill that conviction, Mormons “believe[d] in the literal gathering of Israel.”⁵ This belief necessitated the removal of Mormon believers from all areas of the United States (and eventually non-American Mormons, as well) in order to fulfill prophecies regarding Zion’s attainment. In addition, Smith kept careful records of important church members and Mormon families who migrated to Missouri, partially explaining why Smith and the post-endowment revelations emphasized mission work in New England, Canada, and Great Britain.⁶

Although Missouri Saints began settling in the northern half of Ray County several months before the Missouri legislature officially organized Caldwell County, Missourians accepted and coexisted contentedly with their Mormon neighbors until May 1838. Ray County residents initially approved the settlement of the northern half of their county to bring peace to Clay County and the surrounding areas, and the Saints embraced the opportunity to create new settlements away from persecution and harassment. John Corrill noted, “The Mormons purchased great quantities of land in Caldwell, made improvements, and their works plainly show that they were industrious.”⁷ Whether this work was primarily intended to build up Zion or impress their non-Mormon neighbors, the Missouri Mormons built thriving communities that flourished while the Saints in Ohio struggled. Corrill argued the Missouri Saints “laboured under many disadvantages, on account of their poverty and former difficulties” and were able to triumph over the obstacles Missourians had placed in their way. He recorded examples of a cooperative

⁴ Smith, *Pearl of Great Price*, The Articles of Faith, v. 10.

⁵ Smith, *Pearl of Great Price*, The Articles of Faith, v. 10.

⁶ Esplin, *The Joseph Smith Papers*, pp. 226-227.

⁷ Corrill, *A Brief History of the Church*, p. 26.

spirit between the religious sect and Missourians. In fact, he maintained, “Friendship began to be restored between them and their neighbors, the old prejudices were fast dying away, and they were doing well, until the summer of 1838.” By then, thousands of converts had flocked to northwest Missouri, and Smith and other leaders of the Church in Ohio were living in Caldwell County.

Smith agreed with Whitmer’s assessment of the hard work and diligence of his followers in Zion as well as the cooperative spirit that existed between the religious sect and the Missourians. In a May 1838 editorial published in Far West’s newspaper, the *Elders’ Journal*, in July, Smith insisted, “the church is as pleasantly situated as could be expected” and “at perfect peace with the surrounding inhabitants.”⁸ He praised Caldwell County Saints by writing, “an encomium too high cannot be placed upon the heads of the enterprising and industrious habits of the people of this county. They are fast making for themselves, and their posterity after them, as beautiful, interesting, and as profitable homes, as can be in any country.” He reported, “the crops are very promising, and the prospect is that we will have an abundant harvest” with “hundreds of acres of corn...planted already.” Smith seemed particularly pleased with the Saints because the successes followed the persecution of being expelled from both Jackson County in 1833 and Clay County in 1836. He argued, “Nothing discouraged by the great afflictions and tribulations which they have had to endure for Christ’s sake. They united with all their powers to turn a solitary place into a fruitful field...and exceeded the highest expectations of the most enthusiastic.” The success of the Saints demonstrated a

⁸ “Editorial, 4 May 1838,” pp. 33-34, The Joseph Smith Papers, <http://www.josephsmithpapers.org/paper-summary/editorial-4-may-1838/1>, p. 33.

willingness to work hard for temporal concerns that would help buttress the spiritual goal of the Mormons—growth of the Church and gathering the Saints to Zion.

Growth of the Church also meant an expansion of Zion in northwest Missouri during the first half of 1838. A letter to Smith from Missourian David Thomas, a landowner in Carroll County, dated March 31, 1838, included an invitation to Mormons to purchase land in Carroll County near De Witt. Thomas cajoled, “Sir permit me to say to you, if you could make it convenient or for your advantage to settle in this County, I would let you have part of my land...as good land is in the world.”⁹ Marsh insisted, “I have no doubt you can do as weell here in forming a settlement and probaly better than any place in the state[.] The facilities of the river will be of great servise to in settling this uper country.” In a post script, he offered options for Smith and other Church leaders to expand into Monroe County along the Salt River, as well. On May 19, 1838, Smith and Rigdon visited Lyman Wight in Daviess County and laid claim to a “city plot...called Adam Ondi Awmen [Adam-ondi-Ahman].”¹⁰ These expansions coupled with revelations addressing the inclusion of more stakes in Zion demonstrated the intention of the Saints to expand past the boundaries of Caldwell County and probably contributed to tension with Missourians who believed the Mormon problem had been solved.

Joseph Smith and Sidney Rigdon removed from Kirtland, Ohio, to Far West, Missouri, in March 1838 and quickly asserted control of the Saints living there. Under duress in Kirtland for debt and problems stemming from a failed bank, Smith “with my

⁹ “Letter from David Thomas, 31 March 1838,” p. 26, *The Joseph Smith Papers*, <http://www.josephsmithpapers.org/paper-summary/letter-from-david-thomas-31-march-1838/1>, p. 26.

¹⁰ Smith (journal), *The Joseph Smith Papers*, May 18, 1838-June 1, 1838, p. 271.

family and some others arrived within 8 miles [miles] of Far West” to stay with a Missouri Saint and his family.¹¹ The Prophet appreciated the warm welcome he received “to their little Zion,” which must have been appreciated after his rushed departure from Kirtland. Smith explained, “Many of the brethren came out to meet us who also with open arms welcomed us to their bosoms. We were immediately received under the hospitable roof of George W. Harris who treated us with all kindness possible.” Although Smith fled in Kirtland in part to escape temporal concerns, his arrival in Missouri fulfilled a January 12, 1838, revelation directed to Church leaders and their place in the gathering of the Saints. The revelation said, “Let the presidency of my Church take their families as soon as it is practicable and a door is open for them and move on to the west as fast as made plain.”¹² Saints were promised “a land flowing with milk and honey” and safety from persecution where there would be “peace among yourselves O ye inhabitants of Zion or there shall be no safety for you.” Smith’s presence in Missouri reaffirmed the importance of Zion to Saints across the country and outside the nation and shifted the center of Church leadership from Kirtland to Far West, an action that created additional tension for the Missouri Saints.

Besides revelations regarding the importance of Saints gathering to Zion, John Corrill recorded his own reflections about the scriptural accuracy of the importance of Zion building during the end times. He recalled, “On searching the Scriptures, I found...promises to gather the Israelites from every place where they have been scattered; and that they and their children and their children’s children shall inherit the

¹¹ Smith (journal), *The Joseph Smith Papers*, undated, p. 237.

¹² "Revelation, 12 January 1838–C," p. 1, *The Joseph Smith Papers*, <http://www.josephsmithpapers.org/paper-summary/revelation-12-january-1838-c/1>, p. 1.

land of Israel for ever.”¹³ Corrill added, “Not only is the house of Israel to be gathered; but God hath purposed in the dispensation of the fullness of times, he will gather all things whether in Heaven or in Earth” and included a scriptural reference to Ephesians. Although these scriptures referred to the biblical Israelites and not the Saints in America, Mormon theology included the belief that Mormons are descendants of the Lost Tribes of Israel. Therefore, references to Israel in scripture were not unrelated references to an ancient people. Instead, they were part of relevant doctrine supported by continuing revelations to Joseph Smith. Consequently, the gathering of the Saints gained credence as a biblical commandment as well as a modern development in Mormon theology.

Corrill acknowledged the need for the onset of the endowment as a predecessor for the gathering of Saints to Missouri, which occurred in Kirtland after the dedication of the temple in 1836.¹⁴ He reasoned, “God calls, qualifies, and sends forth men endowed with power” to accomplish “this great work.”¹⁵ Quality missionaries were needed for the task of shepherding converts because “the house of Israel is scattered to all parts of the earth,” but the Lord will send many fishers, and many hunters, and they shall fish them and hunt them from every mountain and hill, and from the holes of the rocks in every land.” Once that happened the Saints would be brought to “the land that he [God] gave to their fathers.” Missionary activity increased following the onset of the endowment with specific instructions from Smith to “be careful and avoid contention, and not to meddle with other orders of Christians, nor proclaim against their doctrines, but to preach the

¹³ Corrill, *A Brief History of the Church*, p. 15.

¹⁴ Corrill, *A Brief History of the Church*, p. 26.

¹⁵ Corrill, *A Brief History of the Church*, p. 15.

gospel in its simplicity, and let others alone.”¹⁶ Criticism from members of other religious denominations in Missouri during the Jackson County conflict and increased persecution in Kirtland throughout 1836 and 1837 surely influenced Smith’s instructions to Mormon missionaries, but persecution from religious leaders of rivals groups contributed to the millenarian worldview of antebellum Mormons. Not surprisingly, Corrill insisted, “there was to be a gathering in the last days,” and Smith’s instructions for Saints to gather to Zion supported Whitmer’s conclusion.¹⁷

On March 9, 1838, almost the same day Smith and Rigdon arrived in Far West, Mormon missionaries Wilford Woodruff, James Townsend, and Joseph Ball wrote a letter to Smith, other Church leaders, and the “Saints in Zion” from their mission in Maine. Woodruff informed the Missouri Saints he had “just heard, correctly, of the deplorable state of things in Kirtland” and that “the Devil is stirred up against me here.”¹⁸ Despite Smiths’ instructions to not aggravate members of other religious groups, Woodruff shared, “One Methodist priest has applied several times for a warrant to take me,” but the man lacked evidence to convince officers of the law to make the arrest. He wrote of constant persecution because missionaries were “naked targets to the press and tongue as we pass through the midst of the Gentiles,” but he claimed, “it is through tribulation that we inherit the blessing and overcome.” Although Woodruff vowed to continue his work as a missionary until his mission was complete, he longed to migrate to Zion and join his brethren there. He wrote, “We are advising the Saints of God to go

¹⁶ Corrill, *A Brief History of the Church*, p. 26.

¹⁷ Corrill, *A Brief History of the Church*, p. 15.

¹⁸ "Letter from Wilford Woodruff and Others, 9 March 1838," p. 35-36, The Joseph Smith Papers, <http://www.josephsmithpapers.org/paper-summary/letter-from-wilford-woodruff-and-others-9-march-1838/1>, p. 35.

from this country to Zion, as soon as they can.” He also asked for the Saints in Zion to pray for him and his fellow missionaries as they worked to build up the Church through additional converts and instruct them to remove to Missouri or other stakes of Zion.

Three weeks after arriving in Missouri and Woodruff penned his letter to the Missouri Saints, Smith wrote to the Presidency in Kirtland informing them of the situation in Missouri and the state of the Church. He expressed his relief to have escaped “wicked vexatious Lawsuits” that had plagued him for seven years and lauded the tranquil state of affairs in Far West and the surrounding communities.¹⁹ He reported, “The saints at this time are in union & peace & love prevails throughout, in a word Heaven smiles upon the saints in Caldwell.”²⁰ The calm in Far West allowed for Smith and the community to welcome additional Church leadership, establish homesteads for their families, and prepare the land for planting. Besides temporal concerns, Smith assured the Ohio leaders that his residence in Missouri allowed him to concentrate on religious issues and not the problems facing those who remained behind in Ohio. He pledged, “I have nothing to do but to attend to my spiritual concerns or the spiritual affairs of the Church.” Near the end of the letter, Smith related a vision that ensured the triumph of the Church over persecution and attempts to harass the faithful. The vision included a “chariot of fire” which “rode away triumphantly” after an “Angel of the Lord” gathered one of the Saints into the vehicle.²¹ Smith insisted the image indicated that he

¹⁹ “Letter to the Presidency in Kirtland, 29 March 1838,” p. 23, The Joseph Smith Papers, <http://www.josephsmithpapers.org/paper-summary/letter-to-the-presidency-in-kirtland-29-march-1838/1>, p.23.

²⁰ Smith (journal), *The Joseph Smith Papers*, March 29, 1838, p. 246.

²¹ Smith (journal), *The Joseph Smith Papers*, March 29, 1838, p. 247.

might “know the hand of the Lord,” which likely comforted the Saints in Ohio and assured them the persecution they faced would eventually end.

The religious matters Smith addressed during his early days in Missouri included questions and concerns regarding the strengthening of Zion. Some of the recorded teachings focused on the role of the Melchizedek priesthood in establishing Zion in Missouri. Elias Higbee posed a question about Isaiah 52:1, to which Smith answered it was a “reference to those whome God should call in the last day’s who should hold the power of Priesthood to bring again zion and the redemption of Israel.”²² In addition, Smith received a revelation on April 26, 1838, addressing “the will of God, concerning the building up of this place and of the Lord’s House.”²³ Smith revealed the Saints were to “arise and shine forth that they light may be a standard for the nations and that thy gathering to-gether upon the land of zion.” Far West was to be a holy city that provided a haven for the Saints when wrath “shall be poured out without mixture upon the whole Earth.” In order to consecrate the land, the Saints were to construct another temple with the groundbreaking and laying of the cornerstone to begin on July 4 and continue throughout the following year. If the Saints followed Smith’s instructions, they would be rewarded for their faithfulness, but the revelation also warned that failure to follow Smith’s directives would result in God’s displeasure with the Missouri Saints.

With numerous instructions and repeated encouragement to the Saints to remove to Missouri or other stakes of Zion, converts to the religious group migrated westward, especially to Caldwell County. William Swartzell was one of those Church members

²² Esplin, *The Joseph Smith Papers*, p. 239.

²³ "Revelation, 26 April 1838 [D&C 115]," p. 32, *The Joseph Smith Papers*, <http://www.josephsmithpapers.org/paper-summary/revelation-26-april-1838-dc-115/1>, p. 32.

who emigrated to Missouri during 1838. Although he later apostatized, the record of his journey to Far West chronicled his dedication to reaching the Missouri Zion and the obstacles he faced along the way. Full of optimism and convinced of his purpose, he left Carroll County, Ohio, in April 1838 to head west and join his fellow Saints at the behest of Smith's directives to the Church. He wrote, "Off I started, to the land of Zion, full of notions of heavenly wonders, which were to be shown forth by the immaculate Joe Smith and his compeers."²⁴ Within a few weeks, he encountered other men "who were emigrating with their families to the Far West, in Missouri."²⁵ Days later, he "overtook a great number of brother Mormons" and enjoyed time with them before heading out on his own. Those frequent meetings with fellow Saints bolstered Swartzell's confidence as he traveled and indicated the fervor with which the religious sect adhered to revelations and instructions about partaking in the gathering in Zion.

Although he was often surrounded by members of his own faith, Swartzell was still in danger during his travels. He documented several instances of mistreatment of himself and other Saints, which he claimed were a result of religiously inspired anger. He reported the actions of a ferry-man in Illinois who "swore terribly at the Mormons, and said they were all a d—d pack of villians [sic], and would go to hell any how, as the devil was at the head of the caravan."²⁶ Although the man did ferry the Mormon emigrants across the river, he charged them more than other patrons and refused to help an old woman who had apostatized and was returning to the east from her time in

²⁴ William Swartzell, *Mormonism Exposed, Being a Journal of a Residence in Missouri from the 28th of May to the 20th of August, 1838*, (Pittsburgh: A. Ingram, Jr., Printer, 1840), pp. 5-6.

²⁵ Swartzell, *Mormonism Exposed*, p. 6.

²⁶ Swartzell, *Mormonism Exposed*, p. 7.

Missouri. He claimed the woman “had been at the ferry for two or three days, trying to beg her passage over. But all were deaf to her entreaties.” Near Terra Haute, Indiana, he encountered “so much stabbing, shooting, robbing, and gambling, that I thought it was no place for me, and that if they would get hold of a poor Mormon, it would be the last of him.” He also reported trouble for a fellow Mormon who was pursued by a Methodist minister to recover a legally purchased gun. By the time Swartzell reached Missouri on May 25, he had traveled for almost two months and had lost personal property to persecutors. He had “no boots to walk in; [because] some one was kind enough to throw them in the river.”²⁷ As a result, he walked forty miles from the Missouri River to Far West in “a thin pair of pumps, which I did not like very well.” Despite his struggles, Swartzell rejoiced when he reached Far West and joined the community of Saints gathered there and celebrated his good fortune and auspicious position in the Mormon community.

When Swartzell arrived in Far West, he received a hospitable welcome from the Prophet himself as well as two methods of employment. He soon became “steward to Joseph Smith, Jr.” in addition to “an assistant surveyor...to help lay off the Stake (or city) of Grand River.”²⁸ Although Swartzell held positions of favor in the Mormon Church, his written account indicated his skepticism and displeasure with both Smith and other influential Mormons within the first few days of his employment. He commented on the greed of Mormon surveyors who carved out special lots for certain Saints rather than providing equally for all. Swartzell “particularly observed that the *least* among the

²⁷ Swartzell, *Mormonism Exposed*, p. 9.

²⁸ Swartzell, *Mormonism Exposed*, p. 9.

brethren were the *least noticed*, and *got the least*” while “Brother Ripley, the chief surveyor, would say, ‘brother such-an-one must have a good lot, and brother such-an-other might look out for himself.’”²⁹ As the head cook, he “took note of a great many things...that did not *savor* very strongly of piety, or honesty.” On June 1, 1838, Swartzell recorded an exchange with Smith during which the Prophet said, “‘We are getting along, brother Swartzell; be a faithful steward, and we will remember you well.’ Thinks I to myself, ‘So much for that.’” Despite his humor, Swartzell’s cynicism toward the Mormon leader increased throughout 1838 until he eventually left the Church. His decision to leave the Mormon faith in spite of his favorable position hinted at considerable tension within the Mormon community and its religious leadership leading up to the armed conflict in October 1838.

The growing number of Mormon residents in Caldwell County undoubtedly contributed to mounting distrust between the Saints and their Gentile neighbors following Smith’s arrival in Far West and contributed to a sense of persecution among the Saints. Smith’s May 4, 1838, editorial in the *Elders’ Journal* included numerous mentions of persecution of the Saints in Missouri and across the nation. He wrote, “Great have been the exertions of the opposers to righteousness, to prevent us from sending abroad the doctrines of the church to the world: every effort has been used by the combined influence of all classes of enemies, and of all sects and parties of religion.”³⁰ He claimed the Saints “had been driven from their homes, and all their property destroyed and had to come here without any thing.— But to their honor it may be said, that few people on

²⁹ Swartzell, *Mormonism Exposed*, p. 10.

³⁰ "Editorial, 4 May 1838," The Joseph Smith Papers, p. 33.

earth have endured the same degree of persecution, with the same patience.” He encouraged the Saints that they suffered “great afflictions and tribulations” for Christ’s sake, which would be rewarded during the last days when the Saints were safe in Zion. Smith reminded the Saints that persecution played a vital role in the gathering and buildup of Zion by writing, “when there was an assault being made, of liars, thieves, and religionists, with their rulers all combined, we were aware of it, and fled to ‘Far West,’ and we are here preaching the gospel.”³¹ Smith also warned of “evils that existed, and would exist” due to people who sought to “destroy the characters of the Presidency” by “whining and growling about their money, because they had kept the saints and bore some of the burden with others.”³² He encouraged the Saints to believe each other rather than outsiders and not fall prey to persecutors of the faith. As such, persecution remained at the center of millennial beliefs and was a vital part of the growth and development of the Missouri Zion.

Miscommunication, whether intentional or consequential, about the creation of Caldwell County also contributed to the rising tension and perceived persecution in northwest Missouri by mid-1838. Although Ray County citizens initially approved the Mormon request to settle the northern half of Ray County, the establishment of Caldwell County resulted in “conflicting expectation” regarding the location of Zion. Missourians viewed Caldwell County as the answer to the Mormon problem because they expected the religious group to settle there and remain within the county’s borders. However, the continued gathering of the Mormon faithful meant the population of Mormons continued

³¹ "Editorial, 4 May 1838," The Joseph Smith Papers, p. 34.

³² "Discourse, 6 May 1838," p. 38, The Joseph Smith Papers, <http://www.josephsmithpapers.org/paper-summary/discourse-6-may-1838/1>, p. 38.

to increase. Such large numbers of Mormon emigrants necessitated expansion outside of Caldwell County's borders and into Daviess, Livingston, and Carroll counties and coincided with a January 12, 1838, revelation that addressed the establishment of additional stakes of Zion as the gathering continued. Smith revealed, "No stake shall be appointed except by the first presidency...otherwise, it will shall not be counted as a stake of Zion." The stakes were essential in "laying the foundation of and establishing my [God's] Kingdom."³³ Jamon Aldrich's letter of September 1838 also speaks about the centrality of the Saint's gathering when he encouraged his brother to move to Missouri from New Hampshire in order to obey a spiritual commandment, an action that would contribute to the establishment of the Mormon kingdom of Zion. LeSueur insists the continued influx of Mormon families into Daviess and Caldwell counties, as well as Mormon encroachment into non-Mormon areas (such as the village of De Witt), significantly contributed to the unease of Missourians towards their Mormon neighbors, while Walker argues Missourians were primarily interested in confiscating valuable property (mills, for example). Regardless of the motivations behind Missourians' anger, a steadily increasing Mormon population in and around Caldwell County was a determining factor in the onset of armed conflict in the fall of 1838.

Besides political persecution, the months leading up to the 1838 Mormon War witnessed an increase in religious persecution from both inside and outside the Mormon community. Acceptance of persecution as a facet of religious faith and a precondition of millennial beliefs solidified Mormon acquiescence to tribulations and harassment in settling what Smith's revelations termed the Promised Land, but challenges from within

³³ "Revelation, 12 January 1838-B," p. 1, The Joseph Smith Papers, <http://www.josephsmithpapers.org/paper-summary/revelation-12-january-1838-b/1>, p. 1.

the Church frustrated Smith and other Church leaders as well. As early as 1833, Smith asserted, “man is treche[r]ous and selfish but few excepted” and recognized “evil and wickedness” within his own followers.³⁴ That same year, Smith labeled Oliver Cowdery as a man “with two evils in him that he must needs forsake or he cannot altogeth[er] escape the buffetings of the adver[sar]y. If he shall forsak[e] these evils he shall be forgiven.”³⁵ Cowdery’s significance in the formation of early Mormonism stemmed from his friendship with Smith, his integral role in helping translate the Book of Mormon in the late 1820s, and his work as “assistant president” for Smith in 1836.³⁶ By early 1838, Smith was displeased with Cowdery and had called for him to repent and humble himself. Cowdery wrote to Smith on January 21 and addressed the criticism. He penned, “I learn from Kirtland, by the last letters, that you have publickly said, that when you were here [in Missouri] I confessed to you that I had willfully lied about you.”³⁷ He asked for an explanation and correction to the accusation in the letter, although that did not occur.

Smith recorded Cowdery’s crimes in his journals on April 9, 1838. They include such atrocities as “leaving his Calling . . . appointed him by revelation for the sake of filthy lucre and turning to the practice of law,” “virtually denying the faith by declaring that he would not be governed by any ecclesasticle authority nor revelation whatever in his temporal affairs,” “selling his lands in Jackson Co[unty] Contrary to the revelations,”

³⁴ Faulring, *An American Prophet’s Record*, p. 14.

³⁵ Faulring, *An American Prophet’s Record*, p. 17.

³⁶ Faulring, *An American Prophet’s Record*, p. xxxviii.

³⁷ "Letter from Oliver Cowdery, 21 January 1838," p. 80, The Joseph Smith Papers, <http://www.josephsmithpapers.org/paper-summary/letter-from-oliver-cowdery-21-january-1838/1>, p. 80.

and “seeking to destroy the Character of Pres[ident] Joseph Smith, Jr., by fals[e]ly insinuating that he was guilty of Adultery &c.”³⁸ Cowdery left the Church in early 1838 and was subsequently excommunicated for his action. Although he eventually returned to Mormonism ten years later under the leadership of Brigham Young, the defection of such an important Church leader at this crucial juncture in the group’s history hinted at deep fissures in the Mormon community that preceded the armed conflict in October 1838.³⁹

Although Whitmer and Smith both insisted the Saints lived in peace with their Missouri neighbors up through the summer of 1838, the spirit of persecution continued to plague the Saints as did problems within the Church. During Smith’s final months in Ohio, dissension within the religious group burgeoned enough to rival persecution from those outside the faith as the primary concern of Smith and others in Church leadership. In addition to Cowdery’s defection, several other prominent Mormon leaders either left the Mormon faith or suffered excommunication due to perceived persecution by the Mormon prophet. Smith recorded in his journal a revelation received on September 4, 1837, concerning Whitmer, Samuel James, and William Phelps in which God revealed to the prophet that the men “have done those things which are not pleasing in my Sight. Therefore, if they repent not they Shall be removed out of their places.”⁴⁰

A January 7, 1838, revelation to Edward Partridge, who served as the Church’s first bishop and lived in Caldwell County at the time, served as a warning to the Missouri

³⁸ Faulring, *An American Prophet’s Record*, p. 173.

³⁹ Faulring, *An American Prophet’s Record*, p. xxxix.

⁴⁰ Faulring, *An American Prophet’s Record*, p. 167.

Church that conflict from within would present a significant stumbling block to the building up on Zion. Partridge revealed, “thus saith the Lord, let my people be aware of dissensions among them lest the enemy have power <over> them. Awake my shepherds and warn my people! for behold the wolf cometh to destroy them!”⁴¹ In Kirtland, Smith faced challenges to his authority by several other Church leaders, particularly as financial debts grew, the bank failed, and persecution from Ohio citizens increased. Challenges to his authority in Kirtland combined with the potential of arrest likely hastened his departure to Missouri. Corrill summarized the events by writing that the Saints in Ohio “suffered from jealousies to arise among them, and several persons dissented from the church, and accused the leaders of the church with bad management, selfishness, seeking for riches, honor, and dominion, tyrannising over the people, and striving constantly for power and property.”⁴² In return, he claimed, “the leaders of the church accused the dissenters with dishonesty, want of faith, and righteousness, wicked in their intentions, guilty of crimes, such as stealing, lying, encouraging the making of counterfeit money, &c.” Unfortunately, the Missouri leadership, particularly the presidency, also threatened the amount of control Smith held over the governance of the Church until they were neutralized, removed from office, and excommunicated.

In the weeks preceding Smith and Rigdon’s removal from Kirtland to Far West, the leaders criticized the members of the Missouri presidency, who were then tried by the Church’s High Council. A January 12 revelation established the right of the High

⁴¹ "Letter and Revelation to Edward Partridge, 7 January 1838," p. 52, The Joseph Smith Papers, <http://www.josephsmithpapers.org/paper-summary/letter-and-revelation-to-edward-partridge-7-january-1838/1>, p. 52.

⁴² Corrill, *A Brief History of the Church*, p. 27.

Council to try the Missouri presidency for challenging the Church's highest offices. David Whitmer refused to submit to examination over theological differences by the High Council and resigned from the Presidency. He was then excommunicated at almost exactly the same time Smith and Rigdon arrived in Missouri.⁴³ John Whitmer and W.W. Phelps were charged and tried "because they purchased land with church funds, in their own name for their own aggrandizement" and "they selected the place for the city Far West, and appointed the spot for the house of the Lord to be built on, drew the plan of the said house, and appointed and ordained a committee to build the same without asking or seeking counsel, at the hand of either Bishop, High Council, or first Presidency."⁴⁴ In February 1838, Thomas Marsh reported on the trial in a letter to the Church. He wrote, "John Whitmer and William W. Phelps were in transgression, and that if they repented not, they should be removed out of their places."⁴⁵ During the trial, Mormon Elder George Hinkle "read a written document containing a number of accusations against the three presidents," including David Whitmer's "use of tea, coffee, and tobacco." Lyman Wight, a Mormon elder, argued, "all other accusations were of minor importance compared to their [Phelps and J. Whitmer's] selling their lands in Jackson County." Wight worried their behavior "set an example which all the members were liable to follow." This "hellish principle" would have resulted in the loss of valuable land in Jackson County—lands that Smith and other Church leaders expected to regain eventually in the continued work to redeem Zion.

⁴³ Esplin, *The Joseph Smith Papers*, p. 255.

⁴⁴ "Letter to Wilford Woodruff, circa 18 June 1838," pp. 36-37, *The Joseph Smith Papers*, <http://www.josephsmithpapers.org/paper-summary/letter-to-wilford-woodruff-circa-18-june-1838/1>, p. 36.

⁴⁵ "Letter from Thomas B. Marsh, 15 February 1838," p. 44-46, *The Joseph Smith Papers*, <http://www.josephsmithpapers.org/paper-summary/letter-from-thomas-b-marsh-15-february-1838/1>, p. 44.

Not everyone on the High Council agreed with the criticism of the Missouri Church's presidency. John Corrill, who later apostatized, argued the meeting was illegal and the trial should be held before a proper tribunal, "which he considered to be a bishop and twelve high priests." Partridge, who was a bishop in the Missouri Church, refused to "lift his hand against the presidency," but read a letter from Smith during the proceedings that indicated his continued support of the prophet. Elder Solomon Hancock "plead in favor of the presidency, stating that he could not raise his hand against them."

Unfortunately for the Whitmers and Phelps, the majority of those who voted in the trial disapproved of the men's actions, with the minority wanting "them to continue in offioe [office] little longer, or until Joseph Smith jr. came up." Thomas Marsh, who served in the capacity of clerk, reported the High Council's decision to Smith in Kirtland. He relayed his belief that the removal of the Missouri presidency prevented further problems within the Church because it was "about to go to pieces, in consequence of the wickedness of those men."⁴⁶ Marsh confided to Smith that he hoped the trial meant the Missouri Church had "things in a good degree straightened by the time you arrive here." By March 1838, the offending men had been expelled from the Church and "union and peace and love" prevailed throughout Mormon lands in Missouri.⁴⁷ However, Smith recognized the potential for continued threats writing, "We have no uneasiness about the power of our enemies in this place to do us harm," regardless of whether they came from outside or within the Mormon community. Smith's prediction of harm came to fruition in Missouri only six months after he recorded the thought in his journal.

⁴⁶ Letter from Thomas B. Marsh, 15 February 1838," The Joseph Smith Papers, p. 45.

⁴⁷ Faulring, *An American Prophet's Record*, p. 167.

Approximately three weeks after the trial, Smith and Rigdon arrived in Far West and assumed positions of power that could have been challenged if the Whitmers and Phelps had remained in power. As a result, Smith spent considerable effort establishing his authority through communications with other Church members and through theological developments. Smith received support in Woodruff's March 8 letter from Maine when the missionary asked the Saints to "uphold Joseph by prayer, faith, brotherly love, and charity."⁴⁸ He also declared, "judgments awaits the world speedily, Kirtland not excepted, and we do believe that those who have dissented from the body of the church, will have cause to lament for their folly." In his March 29 letter to the Kirtland presidency, Smith communicated that dissension had been quashed. He wrote, "The difficulties of the Church had been adjusted before arrival here by a Judicious High Council...W.W. Phelps & John Whitmer having been cut off from the Church."⁴⁹ The next week in a conference in Far West, Smith expressed his concerns about the loyalty of some Church leaders "whom he would not recommend to the conference."⁵⁰ The next day, on April 9, 1838, Smith and Sidney Rigdon sent John Whitmer a letter commenting on his "incompetency as a historian" and claiming his work, if sent to press, would harm the Church because of incorrect information regarding the role of Saints in Missouri.⁵¹ Despite the support of many important and influential Saints in Missouri, Kirtland, and

⁴⁸ "Letter from Wilford Woodruff and Others, 9 March 1838," The Joseph Smith Papers, p. 35.

⁴⁹ "Letter to the Presidency in Kirtland, 29 March 1838," The Joseph Smith Papers, p. 23.

⁵⁰ "Minutes, 7–8 April 1838," p. 47, The Joseph Smith Papers, <http://www.josephsmithpapers.org/paper-summary/minutes-7-8-april-1838/1>, p. 47. These included William McLellin, Luke Johnson, Lyman Johnson, and John F. Boynton.

⁵¹ "Letter to John Whitmer, 9 April 1838," p. 28, The Joseph Smith Papers, <http://www.josephsmithpapers.org/paper-summary/letter-to-john-whitmer-9-april-1838/1>, p. 28.

elsewhere, dissension increased rather than ebbed in the months following Smith's arrival in Missouri.

On June 18, 1838, Thomas Marsh wrote a letter to Woodruff, who continued in his service as a missionary in the East. The letter discussed the state of "*poor bleeding Zion*," which had been harmed by, not only persecution from Missourians, but also the internal problems in the Church at Far West.⁵² Marsh identified the laws of consecration, which commanded the transfer of property into the hands of the Church bishop, as the primary reason for conflict with Missouri neighbors, but he also insisted it had contributed to the disaffection of the Saints. Mismanagement of property and funds by John Whitmer and Phelps, which had been the main reason for censure by the High Council, meant the Church lost a significant amount of money causing "many people...[to] withdraw their subscription" and support from the Church. Marsh reported, "the Council, not feeling willing that the church should be defrauded out of two thousand dollars of their public funds...called the whole church in Zion together, who almost unanimously voted them out of their presidential office."⁵³ In addition, some Kirtland Saints attempted to "repent and become satisfied with Br. Joseph and the church. Others did the same:— But this settlement was not long in duration." After Smith and Rigdon's removal to Far West, some in Kirtland "united together for the overthrow of the church" and, in December 1837, "openly, and publickly, renounced the church of Christ, of Latter Day Saints, and claimed themselves to be the old standard." In the following months,

⁵² "Letter to Wilford Woodruff, circa 18 June 1838," The Joseph Smith Papers, p. 36.

⁵³ "Letter to Wilford Woodruff, circa 18 June 1838," The Joseph Smith Papers, p. 37.

many of the apostatized “openly renounced the book of Mormon, and become deists,” which contributed to troubles within the Mormon Church.

Marsh assured Woodruff that Smith retained control over the situation and remained in control of the Church. Marsh wrote, “Br. Joseph, and the whole church, denounced them as heretics” and united in disapproval of the dissenters so that the “church now flourishes, and the Saint rejoice, and the internal enemies of the church, are *down*.”⁵⁴ In his journal, Smith agreed with Marsh’s assessment of the “miserable condition” of dissenters.⁵⁵ Smith lamented, “O!! foolish Man! what excuse is that thou renderest, for they sins, that because thou hast heard of some mans transgression, that thou shouldest leave thy God.”⁵⁶ He warned, “beware! beware! for God will bring the[e] Judgement for they sins.” He also criticized former leaders Cowdery, the Whitmers, and Lyman Johnson for their attempts to “overthrow the Kingdom of God” and expressed his hope they would continue to seek out opportunities to repent and humble themselves in order to return to gain favorable positions in the religious community.⁵⁷ Marsh reflected Smith’s sentiments in his letter to Woodruff by writing, “How blind and infatuated are the minds of men, when once turned from righteousness to wickedness.”⁵⁸ He argued they would miss out on the “prophecy of Daniel, which says, ‘The *Saints* shall take the kingdom’ ...And the Saints here alluded to, were certainly Latter Day Saints.” For those who apostatized or were excommunicated, the promise of Zion no longer applied. Since

⁵⁴ "Letter to Wilford Woodruff, circa 18 June 1838," The Joseph Smith Papers, p. 38.

⁵⁵ Smith (journal), *The Joseph Smith Papers*, July 4, 1838, p. 278.

⁵⁶ Smith (journal), *The Joseph Smith Papers*, May 11, 1838, p. 268.

⁵⁷ Smith (journal), *The Joseph Smith Papers*, July 4, 1838, p. 276.

⁵⁸ "Letter to Wilford Woodruff, circa 18 June 1838," The Joseph Smith Papers, p. 36.

they had been cut off from the Saints and were no longer part of the gathering, they had lost their place in the inheritance.

Tensions within the Church and with Mormons who had defected or been excommunicated continued to increase during June 1838. These defections coupled with threats from Missourians until Church leadership decided to respond. On June 17, Rigdon preached an incendiary sermon, commonly referred to as the “Salt Sermon,” at Far West that sparked vigilante justice within the Mormon community and likely concerned Missourians who heard Rigdon’s words.⁵⁹ Smith recorded the significance of the event in his journal in July by writing, “Prest Rigdon preached one Sabbath upon the salt that had lost its savour, that it is henceforth good for nothing but to be cast out, and troden under foot of man.”⁶⁰ Smith and other Mormon leaders considered the national government an insufficient source of protection for the community of Saints, who were not only dealing with internal threats from those who had apostatized but also threats of mob action by Missourians and Mormons increasingly settled outside Caldwell County. Thus, Mormons created their own protective force in the form of the Daughters of Zion, later renamed the Danite Band.⁶¹ The Danite constitution declared the group’s purpose “the preservation of our...religion, and of our most sacred rights and of the rights of our

⁵⁹ Smith (journal), *The Joseph Smith Papers*, May 18, 1838-June 1, 1838, p. 274.

⁶⁰ Smith (journal), *The Joseph Smith Papers*, July 4, 1838, p. 276.

⁶¹ These two names demonstrate the importance of both millennial thought and persecution as primary ideals within the Mormon faith. The Daughters of Zion alludes to the protection of the Millennial Kingdom by the those closest to the Father, in this case, God. The Danite Band takes its name from the prophet Daniel who, when exiled from his home country, received a prophetic vision regarding the destruction of the enemies of the Jewish nations, the annihilation of worldly kingdoms, and visions of the End Times.

wives and children.”⁶² Most importantly, the band existed to “support and defend the rights conferred on us by our venerable sires, who purchased them with the pledges of their lives, their fortunes, and their sacred honors.” Although at first organized to “drive from the county of Caldwell all those who dissented from the Mormon church,” the group became an organization to “resist tyranny, whether it be in kings or in the people...Our rights we must have, and our rights we shall have, in the name of Israel’s God.”⁶³

Much as Mormon theology intertwined politics with religious beliefs, the goals of the vigilante band of Mormon protectors entangled guarding of Mormon interests with political liberty in response to threats by Missourians. In the introduction to Smith’s journals, Faulring identified the months of June, July, and August as those during which “Vigilante Mormons organize[d] as Danites.”⁶⁴ Smith, who grew weary of the inadequacy of governmental protection, equated religious and political freedom when he urged Mormons to engage in protective activities centered on establishing the opportunity for fair treatment and escape from continued persecution. A journal entry dated July 27, 1838, stated, “We have a company of Danites in these times, to put to right physically that which is not right, and to clense the Church of every [very?] great evil[s?] which has hitherto existed among us [and]...cannot be put to right by teachings and persuasyons [sic].”⁶⁵ Smith claimed, “They [Danites] come up to consecrate [the area]” and

⁶² Daviess County, Missouri, Circuit Court Records, 1839, Western Historical Manuscripts, University of Missouri-Columbia, C2690, p. 3.

⁶³ Daviess County Circuit Court Records, C2690, pp. 1, 4.

⁶⁴ Faulring, *An American Prophet’s Record*, p. xxix.

⁶⁵ Faulring, *An American Prophet’s Record*, p. 198.

constituted a necessary group of defenders of the Mormon faith.⁶⁶ The November 8, 1839, edition of the *St. Louis Argus* also referenced the Danites and provided a summary of the group's purpose. According to this report, the Mormons had "lately organized themselves into a band of what they call 'Danites,' [who have] sworn to support their leaders in all they say or do, right or wrong."⁶⁷ In addition, the article reported, "There is another band of twelve, called the 'Destructives,' whose duty it is to watch the movements of men and communities, and to avenge themselves for supposed wrongful movements against them." Vigilante action threatened by Smith in 1835 if Mormons grievances failed to receive redress in the courts finally occurred with increasing frequency in the months preceding the violence that erupted in the late summer and fall of 1838.

Sampson Avar, who was the "leader of the Mormon vigilante group during the Missouri period called the Danites" and "insisted the group was sanctioned by church leaders," provided testimony concerning the Danite group's creation and purpose following the armed conflict's conclusion.⁶⁸ Avar, who left the Church in 1838 but was not officially excommunicated until 1850, testified to the Fifth Judicial Court of Missouri in January 1839 that the Mormon prophet "spoke of the grievances we had suffered in Jackson, Clay, Kirtland and other places; declaring that we must in future, stand up for our rights as citizens of the United States, and as saints of the most high God; and that it was the will of God we should do so."⁶⁹ He testified Smith insisted "that we should be

⁶⁶ Faulring, *An American Prophet's Record*, p. 198.

⁶⁷ *St. Louis Argus*, November 8, 1838, 1-5.

⁶⁸ Faulring, *An American Prophet's Record*, p. xxxv.

⁶⁹ Daviess County Circuit Court Records, C2690, p. 2.

free and independent, and that as the State of Missouri and the United States, would not protect us, it was high time we should be up, as the saints of the most high God, and protect ourselves and take the kingdom.” Continuing to combine religious freedom with political duty, Avard claimed Smith labeled the United States as “rotten” and compared “the Mormon church to the little stone spoken of by the Prophet Daniel; and the dissenters first, and the State next, was part of the image that should be destroyed by this little stone.” The Saints believed God had called the faithful body of the Mormon Church to disassociate themselves from the corrupted political entity of Missouri and the United States in order to establish a pure form of government that advocated protection for all American citizens. In addition, a pure government should recognize the validity of Mormon leadership, the right to full citizenship, and the privileges that result from that membership.

Politically charged language by the Saints towards those who refused to support the Mormon cause of establishing the kingdom of Zion mirrored the language Missourians used to dismiss the religious group’s theological beliefs. The rhetoric also demonstrated how easily and completely religious and political goals intertwined as the Saints sought to protect Zion. During 1838, the Saints utilized “creative new religious expressions in which themes from the national culture bulked large”—often combining religious language with republican ideology.⁷⁰ In one instance, Sampson Avard gave testimony against Smith, Hiram Smith (Joseph’s brother), and other Church leaders by claiming Smith labeled “all who did not take up arms in defence of the Mormons of

⁷⁰ Noll, *America’s God*, p. 115.

Daviess should be considered as tories, and should take their exit from the county.”⁷¹

Smith’s use of the word Tory to describe Mormons who failed in their political duty strengthened the connection between freedom of religious expression and political obligations of Mormons to support their ruling body or government. Disloyalty by Mormons against Smith and his orders resulted in banishment from the Mormon controlled Daviess and Caldwell counties and, in many cases, excommunication from the Latter-day Saints’ community. In addition, these Mormon “tories” signified a disloyal faction in the Church that refused to uphold true American democratic ideals by rejecting the Mormon faith.

The Danites also held a religious position within the Mormon community as well as a political purpose. They considered themselves as agents in “bringing forth the millennial kingdom” in addition to their role as upholders of the Saints’ legal rights.⁷² According to Avard’s testimony, Smith believed the “work of the Lord was rolling on,” and “that he knew from prophecy and from the revelation of Jesus Christ, that the enemies of the kingdom were in their hands; and that they [the Mormon church] should succeed” in providing a setting for establishing Zion in Caldwell and Daviess counties. As a result of a revelation, Smith explained to troops assembled in Far West, Missouri, “that the kingdom of God should be set up, and should never fall; and for every one we lacked in number of those who came against us, the Lord would send angels, who would fight for us; and that we should be victorious.”⁷³ The Danites led the Mormons in “their

⁷¹ Daviess County Circuit Court Records, C2690, p. 1.

⁷² Daviess County Circuit Court Records, C2690, p. 1.

⁷³ Daviess County Circuit Court Records, C2690, p. 3.

duty to come up to the State called Far West, and to possess the kingdom; that it was the will of God they should do so; and that the Lord would give them power to possess the kingdom.”⁷⁴ Since the Saints surrendered to Missourians and were exiled from Missouri by early 1839, Smith’s revelations about God’s protection and a triumph by the Saints proved problematic. Regardless, Avar’s testimony about the Danite band’s goals illustrated the convergence of political and religious concerns in Daviess and Caldwell County’s Mormon communities and supported Smith’s own explanation for the group’s existence.

Equally as important as the Danite band’s responsibility to protect the Saints from outside threats, Danites sought to eradicate threats from within the Mormon community, especially since the group was created immediately following Rigdon’s “Salt Sermon.” Included with Avar’s testimony about the purpose and creation of the Danites in the Daviess County Circuit Court records was a letter dated June 1838 addressed to Oliver Cowdery, David Whitmer, John Whitmer, William Phelps, and Lyman Johnson, who had all dissented or been excommunicated from the Church in early 1838. The note warned the addressees that vengeance for betrayal of the prophet Smith and God’s ultimate plan “will overtake you at an hour when you do not expect, and at a day when you do not look for it; and for you there shall be no escape.”⁷⁵ Smith recorded in his diary, “the wicked flee when no man pursueth, These men took warning, and soon they were seen bounding

⁷⁴ Daviess County Circuit Court Records, C2690, p. 4.

⁷⁵ Daviess County Circuit Court Records, C2690, p. 5.

over the prairie like the scape Goat to carry of[f] their own sins,” which included “Lying cheating defrauding & swindeling.”⁷⁶

Members of the Mormon community in northwest Missouri suffered religious persecution from outside the state as well as inside due to defections from the Mormon Church in 1837 and 1838. Edward Partridge, the Missouri bishop, wrote a letter to his sister Emily, who lived in Massachusetts. The letter gave voice to his frustration and hurt that she refused to speak to, write to, or visit him because of his religious beliefs. He wrote, “Many times have I been impressed upon to write you a letter...but, then, I would think upon the coldness and indifference, the insulting manna with which you treated me...and I would so dampen my feelings that I would neglect writing.”⁷⁷ Partridge accused his sister of proclaiming to be a “follower of the meek and lowly Jesus...what have I done that makes you hate me?” Partridge’s lengthy letter examined Christian theology, cited several scripture passages, and presented information about the establishment of the “kingdom of God.” He also gently chastised his sister for behavior unbecoming a Christian, particularly her mistreatment of him. In addition, he begged her to explain her reasoning for her vehement hatred of his religious sect. He found her loathing incomprehensible because of Mormonism’s basic Christian tenets of adult baptism, rebirth through Christ, and entrance into a kingdom following death. He claimed, “God has set his hand the second time to recover his people; —that he has sent for the Angels and commissioned men, once more, to build up his kingdom” and warned Emily “that all who willfully deny the Truth [of the Mormon faith]...will be damned,

⁷⁶ Smith (journal), *The Joseph Smith Papers*, July 4, 1838, p. 278.

⁷⁷ Edward Partridge, Letter to Emily Partridge, October 12, 1837, Western Historical Manuscripts, University of Missouri-Columbia, C1622, p. 4.

whether professor or nonprofessor.” He closed his missive by cautioning her, “you will not be able, in the day of judgement [sic], to rise up and condemn me.” From his home in Far West, Partridge sought to defend his faith, accepted persecution, and attempted to evangelize his sister all at the same time. His persistent attempts to convert her emphasized his belief that the Mormon Zion constituted an imminent precursor to Christ’s return. In short, increased persecution from family members, Missouri neighbors, Mormon defectors, and the state government combined to prove the correctness of the Mormon religion to Partridge.

When Jamon Aldrich wrote to his brother in New Hampshire in September 1838, he compared his “fertile” and “healthy” home near the Grand River in northwest Missouri to “the home that Daniel saw that was cut out of the Mountain without hands that filled the whole Earth.”⁷⁸ That fall Aldrich’s corn was “very good” and money was “plenty,”⁷⁹ but peril lay in wait. Sadly for Aldrich and the other Mormon settlers near his homestead, increased persecution and conflict with non-Mormon neighbors resulted in the abandonment of De Witt and the rest of Carroll County by the end of September in order to shelter for safety at Far West in Caldwell County. Unfortunately, removal to the supposedly safe confine designated for Mormon habitation by Missourians failed to protect the religious group from outside threats and internal defections. Irrespective of the Mormon prophet’s revelations and the Church’s attempts to solidify the Mormon community, dreams of a thriving Celestial Kingdom of Zion in Jackson County and the onset of a millennial age marked by Christ’s Second Coming failed. Millennial

⁷⁸ Aldrich, Letter to Daniel Aldrich, C1446, p. 4.

⁷⁹ Aldrich, Letter to Daniel Aldrich, C1446, p. 4.

expectations, persecution from non-Mormon neighbors, internal divisions within the community of Saints, and the intersection of politics and continually developing Mormon doctrine erupted into warfare. The experiences of the Mormon community and the reputation of the state of Missouri was impacted for decades as the Saints and Missourians prepared for war.

Chapter 6—Expelling the Saints

The Saints celebrated Independence Day in Far West, Missouri, with aplomb in 1838. A parade, songs, and rousing speeches and sermons swelled into celebrations of the uniqueness of American republicanism and its special tie to the varied and healthy religious culture that existed in antebellum America. Sidney Rigdon, Smith's trusted advisor and friend, remarked on the connection between the nation's republican spirit and the Mormon community in Far West. In his July 4 oration, he explained to the crowd, "our religious rights so identified with the existence of the nation, that to deprive us of them, will be to doom the nation to ruin, and the Union to dissolution."¹ Rigdon insisted America's unique governmental support of religious freedom was part of God's preparation for "the great work which he had designed to accomplish in the last days, in the face of all people, in order, that the Son of God, the Savior of the world, should come down from heaven, and reign in mount Zion." He lambasted enemies of the Church who threatened "to put an end to the church forever" and indicated the failure of Missouri's government to protect the Saints from mob violence and failure to grant redress were equally guilty of hindering divine plans for the community. Persecution of the Church, Rigdon noted, supported Mormon beliefs that they were set apart by God, so "we choose to suffer affliction with the people of God...but from this day and this hour, we will suffer it no more."² Instead of accepting persecution and allowing for mistreatment, Rigdon declared, "And that mob that comes on us to disturb us; it shall be between us and

¹ Sidney Rigdon, *Oration Delivered by Mr. S. Rigdon on the 4th of July, 1838 at Far West, Caldwell County, Missouri*, (Far West, MO: Far West Journal Office, 1838), p. 6.

² Rigdon, *Oration*, p. 12.

them a war of extermination, for we will follow them, till the last drop of their blood is spilled, or else they will have to exterminate us.”

The incendiary wording of Rigdon’s speech reverberated throughout the religious community at Far West and in the Mormon settlements of northwest Missouri in the days following the Independence Day celebration. Not surprisingly, those outside the religious faith heard the fiery language as well. In his August 1-3, 1838, journal entry, Joseph Smith recorded that Rigdon’s oration was “published in the Far West, a paper published in Liberty Clay County Mo,” which was the newspaper for which Peter Hardeman Burnett served as editor.³ The *St. Louis Argus* also reported on the Independence Day speech in Far West in the September 27, 1838, edition with remarks by the paper’s editors condemning Rigdon’s words as treasonous towards the government. Yet, Rigdon viewed the same circumstances as the failure of Missouri’s civil government to protect Mormon interests, which was a betrayal of the political and religious rights of the Saints. His declaration of “we will not suffer any vexatious law-suits against our people, nor will we suffer any person to come into our streets and abuse them” implied a threat to Missourians but also a problem to the members of his own religious community.⁴ The continued gathering of the Saints resulted in a larger Mormon population in northwest Missouri, which led to persecution from outside the Church and internal fissures. As a result, Church leadership attempted to defend the institution and its members with increasingly republican language fused with millennial overtones, including frequent references to destruction and doom for those around them.

³ Smith (journal), *The Joseph Smith Papers*, August 1-3, 1838, p. 296.

⁴ *St. Louis Argus*, September 27, 1838, 1-5.

Missourians responded to the aggressive rhetoric through increasingly hostile methods. Additionally, Rigdon's conflation of republican and religious identity was reflected in the presence of civil and religious leadership in the Missouri militia. Divergent views on the role of law and government significantly affected the mistrustful way Missourians and their Mormon neighbors viewed each other in the weeks leading up to and during the military conflict in October 1838.⁵

As the prophet, founder, and leader of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints, Joseph Smith celebrated Rigdon's July 4 Oration in his personal records with mentions of both the political and religious importance of the speech.⁶ He wrote in his journal, "This day was spent in celebrating the 4 of July in commemoration of the declaration of <the> Independence of the United States of America."⁷ He lauded the celebration as "splendid and beautiful" as he led the military parade prior to the oration. He recorded accounts of past persecutions against the Church and called the celebration "our declaration of Independence from all mobs and persecutions which have been inflicted upon us time after time <un>till we could bear it no longer. being driven by ruthless mobs and enemies of the truth."⁸ He mentioned property confiscation and lives threatened as crimes against the Church, although he failed to specify a particular time or

⁵ Other secondary works that provide information about the Missouri-Mormon War and the internal and crises in the Church include Alexander L. Baugh, "A Call to Arms: The 1838 Mormon Defense of Northern Missouri," (PhD Dissertation, Brigham Young University, 2000) and H. Michael Marquardt and William Shepard, *Lost Apostles: Forgotten Members of Mormonism's Original Quorum of Twelve*, (Salt Lake City: Signature Books, 2014).

⁶ The official name change to the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints occurred in 1838 by order of a revelation.

⁷ Smith (journal), *The Joseph Smith Papers*, p. 275.

⁸ Smith (journal), *The Joseph Smith Papers*, p. 276.

place for those actions. By 1838, Smith and other Saints had been threatened and stripped of their property near Palmyra, New York; Kirtland, Ohio; and Jackson and Clay Counties in Missouri. Far West, De Witt, and Adam-ondi-Ahmen were havens for the Saints, but even those settlements were surrounded by Missourians who had expressed grievances with the religious group since Smith arrived in Far West in early 1838. Although Smith only records Rigdon's speech was published in *The Far West*, he omitted any opinion about whether that would benefit or harm the Saints. However, it was likely he and others did view it as an announcement to Missourians that the Church would resist further oppression and harassment with armed action.

Despite the harsh rhetoric of the speech, the Mormon leader did not declare war on Missourians in his oration. Although likely overshadowed by provocative phrases and a potential "war of extermination," Rigdon promised, "We will never be the aggressors, we will infringe on the rights of no people; but shall stand for our own until death."⁹ Throughout the speech, he insisted the Church believed in the nation's government and found it "to be the best government in the world."¹⁰ The oration was replete with accolades of the Constitution and the protection of religious practice and expression guaranteed by the country's laws. After all, Rigdon gave this speech only four years after Smith had insisted the displaced Saints in Jackson County work solely within the court system and the law to gain redress in 1834. Two years later, when the Saints faced expulsion from Clay County, the group continued to pursue legal venues to gain satisfaction. The 1833 revelations that called for the Saints recover Zion without

⁹ Rigdon, *Oration*, p. 12.

¹⁰ Rigdon, *Oration*, p. 3.

shedding blood likely contributed to the Church's pacifist position during the Jackson and Clay County periods. Mounting persecution in both Missouri and Ohio, as well as defections within both congregations, contributed to pushing the Saints to the breaking point.

If Missourians found the potential of thousands of armed Mormons in Caldwell, Carroll, and Daviess counties alarming, calls for the continued gathering to Zion surely exacerbated feelings of unease in the area. A July 8, 1838, letter to William Marks and Newel Whitney, elders in the Kirtland congregation at the time, from the Missouri presidency (Smith, Rigdon, and Hyrum Smith) named the two men presidents of the Adam-ondi-Ahmen stake and encouraged them to remove to Daviess County as soon as possible. They began emigrating just as conflict broke out in Missouri in the fall. The Missouri presidency encouraged the men to let go of their lives in Kirtland and gather to Zion in order to take advantage of the abundance there. The letter asked, "Is there not room enough upon the mountains of Adam ondi awman & upon the plains of Obashinihah or Oleashinihah or in the Land where Adam dwelt that you should not covet that which is but the drop & neglect the more weighty matters—" ¹¹ With the bulk of Church work based in the Missouri stakes and internal defections a real threat, Smith needed people he trusted in important positions in Missouri leadership. Thus, he charged them to "come up hither unto the Land of my people even Zion— Let my serv W marks be faithful over a few things & he shall be ruler over many things— Let him preside in...Far West & let him be blessed with the blessings of my people." If Whitney rejected

¹¹ "Letter to William Marks and Newel K. Whitney, 8 July 1838," pp. 1-2, The Joseph Smith Papers, <http://www.josephsmithpapers.org/paper-summary/letter-to-william-marks-and-newel-k-whitney-8-july-1838/1>, p. 1.

the “secret abominations & all of his littleness of soul” before God and removed to Missouri, he would be named a bishop in the Church. While Missourians likely had no knowledge of this letter, it provided ample evidence that Smith and other leaders of the Church remained focused on gathering the Saints to Missouri and building up a religious kingdom there.

Although the *Elders' Journal* was a Mormon publication, Missourians likely had access to the Far West newspaper, especially due to a dearth of other publications in northwest Missouri at the time. The July 1838 edition omitted the text of Rigdon's Independence Day speech, but it included other articles containing problematic information for Missourians who were suspicious of their Mormon neighbors. Mormon religious beliefs regarding the significance of Zion and gathering of the Saints posed a serious threat to non-Mormons who feared being overrun by their religious neighbors. In a section addressed to “the Saints scattered abroad,” David Patten, an important leader in the Missouri Church who was mortally wounded during the October war, elucidated several prophecies from the Bible and other Mormon texts that encouraged the Saints to continue emigrating to Zion and buttressed the surety the Saints were to inherit Missouri as part of their covenant with God. Patten wrote of “the dispensation we have received, which is the greatest of all dispensations.”¹² He explained the promise that a deliverer would arise out of Zion who held the keys of the Kingdom and the fullness of times. Patten's essay identified Joseph Smith as the deliverer because of a March 1838

¹² "Elders' Journal, July 1838," p. 33-48, The Joseph Smith Papers, <http://www.josephsmithpapers.org/paper-summary/elders-journal-july-1838/1>, p. 38.

revelation that identified him as “unto whom rightly belongs the Priesthood and the kees of the Kingdom for an ensign and for the geathering of my people in the Last day.”¹³

The unique status the Saints believed they enjoyed as a result of their covenant with God meant that Missourians who did not subscribe to religion or practiced another denomination were, not only excluded from the coming millennial kingdom, but would suffer in the forthcoming wrath. In the article immediately following Patten’s assertion Smith was the chosen redeemer of Zion, Mormon elders answered questions about the faith, and their responses demonstrated that Mormon theology had skewed from other antebellum Protestant denominations since the founding of the Church in 1830. Some questions appeared innocuous; however, even the most passive questions elicited answers that would have incited Missourians. The first question asked whether the Saints believed the bible, a query that provided a common religious basis for Mormon and other Protestant groups. The answer, though, was worded in a divisive manner. The elders replied, “If we do, we are the only people under heaven that does. For there are none of the religious sects of the day that do.”¹⁴ The next question helped clarify the previous answer by adding, “we believe the bible, and all other sects profess to believe their interpretations of the bible, and their creeds.” The importance of the Christian scriptures to many of the Protestant denominations would have caused anger in both adherents and leaders of other religious groups with whom the Mormons came into contact.

Mormon insistence that non-believers would suffer in the forthcoming wrath was implied in the third question and answered in the *Elder’s Journal* article. The question

¹³ "Revelation, March 1838 [D&C 113]," p. 17, The Joseph Smith Papers, <http://www.josephsmithpapers.org/paper-summary/revelation-march-1838-dc-113/1>, p. 17.

¹⁴ "Elders’ Journal, July 1838," The Joseph Smith Papers, p. 42.

posed, “Will every body be damned but Mormons?” and the answer followed, “Yes, and a great portion of them, unless they repent and work righteousness.”¹⁵ Smith echoed this belief in his journal in late August 1838 when he included an 1837 revelation given to Thomas Marsh, who had often served as a scribe for Smith. The revelation spoke of the punishment awaiting those who refused to believe Mormon teachings. It warned, “darkness covereth the earth...Behold vengeance cometh speedily upon the inhabitants of the earth. A day of wrath! A day of burning! A day of desolation! Of weeping! Of mourning and of lamentation!”¹⁶ The way to escape the forthcoming judgment was to “purify your hearts” and follow Smith’s teachings. Rigdon’s oration also indicated the world and those in it were corrupt and destruction was coming. He claimed, “The earth is...defiled under the inhabitants thereof...therefore hath the curse devoured they earth, and they that dwell therein are desolate: therefore the inhabitants of the earth are burned, and few men left.”¹⁷ The Saints, however, would escape these judgments due to their faith. Instead of being surprised, they “may know it before hand, and be prepared for it, so that none of the things shall overtake us as a thief in the night, and while we are crying peace and safety, sudden destruction come upon us.”¹⁸ Rigdon’s insistence that non-believers would suffer divine punishment as well as become targets of armed action by Mormons seeking to defend themselves would have provided plenty of fodder for Missourians during the summer of 1838.

¹⁵ "Elders' Journal, July 1838," The Joseph Smith Papers, p. 42.

¹⁶ Smith (journal), *The Joseph Smith Papers*, p. 308.

¹⁷ Rigdon, *Oration*, p. 11.

¹⁸ Rigdon, *Oration*, p. 10.

Other questions demonstrated sharp differences between the Mormons and other religious groups that were inherently dissimilar to Methodists, Baptists, Presbyterians, and Campbellites. These included the role of revelation in the Mormon faith, how the Book of Mormon was acquired, and the “fundamental principles of your religion.”¹⁹ Besides the central role of Christ, Mormons also professed, “the gift of the Holy Ghost...the restoration of the house of Israel, and the final triumph of truth.”²⁰ In addition to the literal gathering of the Saints to Missouri, Mormon theology included belief in “the restoration of the Ten Tribes” as a precondition for the fulfillment of Zion.²¹ Mormon theology identified Native Americans as the descendants of the Ten Tribes, and the Saints expected an alliance between Native Americans and the Church in order to hasten the formation of Zion. Parley P. Pratt, an apostle of considerable importance in the Mormon Church during the Missouri period, believed the creation of Zion would result partially from the work of Native Americans and that Mormons would benefit from their industrious allies.²² While Pratt’s reference to a Mormon-Indian alliance was during the Jackson County conflict in 1833, the theological basis for that coalition would have survived throughout the time the Church spent in Missouri and continued into the settlement of Deseret in the late 1840s.²³

Because of Mormon identification with Indians as their partners in Zion building, continued threats from Native American tribes on Missouri’s western frontier contributed

¹⁹ “Elders’ Journal, July 1838,” The Joseph Smith Papers, p. 43.

²⁰ “Elders’ Journal, July 1838,” The Joseph Smith Papers, p. 43.

²¹ Smith, *Pearl of Great Price*, The Articles of Faith, v. 10.

²² Hill, *Quest for Refuge*, p. xix.

²³ Pratt, *History of the Late Persecution*, p. 41.

to Missourians' anger toward the Mormon community.²⁴ The United States federal government helped to create conditions favorable to this belief by removing groups of Indians to the western frontier, which in 1838 consisted of lands past the western boundary of Missouri (modern-day Kansas, Nebraska, and Oklahoma). In his 1837 letter, Edward Partridge wrote to his sister and brother in Pittsfield, Massachusetts, and indicated that a Mormon and Native American compact had already occurred. He explained, "Orders have come to this upper country, to raise 1000 Indians, and also 150 or 200 volunteers among the whites, all to go to Florida to fight the Seminoles...thus fulfilling one revelation."²⁵ However, other Mormons expressed concern regarding these eventual partners by stating, "The United States have been a gathering the Indians from all parts of the states to the territory west of the MO and of the Mississippi etc.—until there is a danger of their Breaking out at least it is considered so."²⁶ From his home in De Witt, Aldrich also wrote of 800 dragoons who protected lands along the Missouri River from potential attack and a standing militia designed to protect Missourians from threats by their Indian neighbors. Aldrich, seeking to reassure his brother about the potential danger, claimed, "this year it is to late for the Indians to come out to battle."²⁷ Ironically, Aldrich's fears of an Indian attack proved much less dangerous than one from the Missouri militia as he was ousted from his home by September 1838.

While Rigdon's July Fourth Oration emphasized the duties of civil leaders to protect the rights and liberties of the Saints, Missourians distrusted Mormon views about

²⁴ *St. Louis Argus*, June 24, 1836, 3-2.

²⁵ Partridge, Letter to Emily Partridge, C1622, p. 1.

²⁶ Aldrich, Letter to Daniel Aldrich, C1446, p. 2.

²⁷ Aldrich, Letter to Daniel Aldrich, C1446, p. 2.

laws and the role of the civil government towards establishing a Mormon religious regime. In his work, Hill argued, “by 1837 or 1838 it seems likely that the notion that the Latter-day Saints were soon to rule on the earth had become a widely accepted principle among them,” one which their non-religious neighbors would have known.²⁸ Although Hill alleged the pinnacle of political activism occurred during Mormon settlement in Illinois during the early 1840s (led by Joseph Smith’s campaign for the United States presidency), he claimed, “Mormon political ambitions grew out of millennial expectations and a desire for sovereignty, and were reinforced by the persecutions their ideals engendered,” all of which was prevalent during the 1830s.²⁹ Evidence of Mormon political activism was confirmed by Mormon desires to embody a party aimed at upholding the true ideals of American democracy.³⁰ Smith’s journal often included references to the Mormon Church aiming to uphold democratic principles and the “true” spirit of American liberty and freedom. On May 10, 1838, Smith claimed, “the Politics of this Church (with but few exceptions only) is that of Democracy; which is the feelings of the speaker [Sidney Rigdon] /who spoke/ this day and /all/ of the First Presidency,” which was the highest leadership of the Mormon Church.³¹ On that day, two months prior to his political manifesto on Independence Day, Rigdon addressed a gathering of Saints about the “Political policy of our Nation” to give equal validity to both the Federal and Democratic parties. The purpose of his address included presenting political issues to members of the Mormon congregation with the hopes of eliciting informed civic

²⁸ Hill, *Quest for Refuge*, p. xix.

²⁹ Hill, *Quest for Refuge*, p. xiv.

³⁰ Corrill, *A Brief History of the Church*, p. 33.

³¹ Faulring, *An American Prophet’s Record*, p. 181.

involvement in national politics, much as his more inflammatory speech in July addressed both internal dissenters and those outside the Church who persecuted the Saints.

While Mormons tired of the mistreatment they suffered at the hands of their Missouri neighbors, Missourians sought to fortify resistance against the religious sect. Citizens from Jackson, Clay, Livingston, Daviess, and Howard counties met sporadically between June 1836 and September 1838 to draw up resolutions towards their unwanted Mormon neighbors and decide on the most appropriate action to take against them. Jackson County residents feared the Mormons would attempt to return to their former homes in Independence and resolved to help their Daviess and Livingston County neighbors quell issues with the Mormon population.³² A committee from Jackson County stated, “the Mormons are a lawless set of beings who entertain principles that lead to CIVIL WAR and that are calculated to destroy both civil and religious liberties.”³³ They claimed to “know the Mormons to be a set of Fanatics and impostors and that they are a pest to the community at large.”³⁴ Editors of the *St. Louis Argus* cautioned angry Missouri residents to react to Mormon problems with patience and resolve. They insisted, “the Mormons are a religious sect, professing to believe some revelation from Heaven, and though we may believe it began in imposture, we are bound, while we adhere to the principle of universal toleration, to abstain from all interference with the exercise of rights that belong to it as fully as to any denomination of Christians.”³⁵ The

³² *St. Louis Argus*, June 10, 1836, 3-1.

³³ *Jefferson City Republican*, September 22, 1838, 2-1.

³⁴ *Jefferson City Republican*, September 22, 1838, 2-1.

³⁵ *St. Louis Argus*, September 27, 1838, 1-5.

editors desired that Missourians wait until the designs and conduct of Mormons were “positively ascertained” before attacking any Mormon community.

Despite the editors of the *Argus* warning Missourians to use patience, reports from angry Missouri citizens against the community of Saints demonstrated an extensive amount of frustration and distrust towards the religious group as weeks passed. By late September 1838, published accounts of problematical Mormon activities ranged from religious offenses to threats against political leaders to settling areas outside designated Mormon safe areas. Although people living near Mormon communities already knew of these events, Missourians living in St. Louis and other areas of the state most likely first learned of the offenses through newspaper accounts sometimes published weeks after the events occurred. On September 27, 1838, the *St. Louis Argus* reported that Mormons “agreed to settle in, and confine themselves to a district of country, which has since been formed into the county of Caldwell; but they have violated that agreement, and are spreading over Davies, Clinton, Livingston, and Carroll [counties].”³⁶ A reported example of these actions was that of F.E. Clark, a Mormon resident of Far West, Missouri, who attempted to buy a plot of land located in Gallatin, Daviess County, in 1837 from a lawyer in the town. The lawyer refused to sell to the Mormon man because of his religious affiliation.³⁷ Encroachment into non-Mormon counties resulted in apprehension by Daviess County residents that “they would be governed soon by the Revelations of the great Prophet, Joe Smith, and hence their anxiety to rid themselves of

³⁶ *St. Louis Argus*, September 27, 1838, 1-5.

³⁷ Bertha Booth Papers, 1837, Western Historical Manuscripts, University of Missouri-Columbia, C3195.

such an incubus.”³⁸ Although the example the *Argus* reported was a year old, residents outside of northwest Missouri probably had minimal understanding of what drove conflicts like the fight which took place on the August election day in Gallatin.

Concerns about Mormon lawlessness and intimidation against Missourians also shaped the way non-Mormons in northwest Missouri reacted to the actions taken by leaders of the Mormon Church. Jackson County residents claimed “that the laws have been disregarded by a set of Fanatics called Mormons” and Daviess County residents consequently became targets of “repeated threats of violence and even extermination.”³⁹ Hiram Cumstock, a representative of Livingston County residents, provided evidence for this threat when he reported “about 250 Mormons, armed and equipped complete, came into Daviess county and surrounded a Mr. Adam Black’s, an acting Justice of the Peace in Daviess, and by threatening his life, forced him to subscribe a paper by which his liberty, as a freeman, is gone.”⁴⁰ The *Argus* editors contributed this attack to Mormon frustration that one of their own received a beating and was denied the chance to vote in a Daviess County election in August.⁴¹ However, Cumstock also claimed Mormons “threatened instant death to all who may oppose their steps of treason,” destroyed crops of non-Mormons, and were “fortifying for a siege” in Far West, the center of Mormon government. While most Missouri residents preached the responsibilities of the American government to protect law-abiding Mormons during the conflict of 1833, those

³⁸ *St. Louis Argus*, September 27, 1838, 1-6.

³⁹ *Jefferson City Republican*, September 22, 1838, 2-2.

⁴⁰ *St. Louis Argus*, September 6, 1838, 1-4.

⁴¹ *St. Louis Argus*, September 27, 1838, 1-5.

same citizens perceived vigilante action and repudiation of laws by Mormons as a threat that called for government intervention in northwest Missouri by late 1838.

The election day incident on which the *Argus* editors reported occurred on August 6, 1838, when a brawl erupted between Mormons and Daviess County residents in Gallatin, Missouri. Mormons residing at Adam-ondi-Ahmen intended to vote in the county election, but non-Mormon citizens, concerned the election would be overrun by the religious group, attempted to bar them from fulfilling their civic duty. Founded only a few months prior to this event, the settlement of Adam-ondi-Ahmen was comprised of approximately 200 houses with an additional 40 families living in wagons. The non-Mormon village of Gallatin, which was the county seat of Daviess County, was “only four houses and several saloons in 1838.”⁴² John Corrill and Sidney Rigdon both reflected on the event and claimed Daviess County residents were concerned their voices would be invalidated by their more populous neighbors.⁴³ Violence broke out on election day as Missourians and Mormons pummeled each other with fists and clubs, resulting in rumors and speculation that many Mormons were killed. When Smith learned of the event, he called for volunteers to march to Gallatin and defend his slain brethren but soon found that reports of deaths were exaggerated and unfounded.⁴⁴ Yet, the event reinforced

⁴² Reed C. Durham, "The Election Day Battle at Gallatin," *Brigham Young University Studies* 13, no. 1 (1972): 36-61. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/43040476>, p. 40.

⁴³ Corrill, *A Brief History of the Church*, pp. 33-34 and Sidney Rigdon, *An Appeal to the American People: Being an Account of the Persecutions of the Church of the Latter Day Saints; and of Barbarities Inflicted on Them by the Inhabitants of the State of Missouri*, (Cincinnati: Shepard and Stearns, 1840), pp. 15-17.

⁴⁴ "Affidavit, 5 September 1838," p. 1, The Joseph Smith Papers, <http://www.josephsmithpapers.org/paper-summary/affidavit-5-september-1838/1>, p. 1.

Smith and Rigdon's beliefs that Missourians intended to deny Church members their rights as citizens because of their religion.

John Corrill provided context in his history for the Election Day Brawl and the intention of the Danites to influence elections in Daviess and surrounding counties. Corrill explained the Danites worked to create political tickets for the counties where Mormon settlements existed with the purpose of swaying elections to either Mormons or candidates who supported the religious group. Corrill expounded, "the people supposed that this ticket was from head quarters [at Far West], and that it was the will of God that all should go for it. But many saw that it was taking undue advantage of the election, and were extremely dissatisfied."⁴⁵ With dissension rampant among Church members during the summer of 1838, the Danites' actions would have contributed to further fracturing of the Church body as election day approached. Although Corrill indicated these tickets were not used in Daviess County, the possibility of fraudulent tickets influencing elections in Caldwell and Carroll counties could have helped justify the use of force by Missourians to stop Mormons from voting in Gallatin. Corrill claimed, "The Mormons got the better [of the beatings], I believe, in that affray, but left the polls I was told, soon after it was over," although some "citizens threatened those Mormons that had distinguished themselves in the battle."⁴⁶ Although Corrill described the event as political, there was also a religious undertone from both sides connected to the incident. The Danites were an organization intent on protecting the Church from religious dissention and attacks by outsiders. Missourians feared the takeover of Daviess County

⁴⁵ Corrill, *A Brief History of the Church*, p. 33.

⁴⁶ Corrill, *A Brief History of the Church*, pp. 33-34.

by a religiously monolithic group. Thus, both sides continued the conflation of religious identity and republican identity during and beyond the Daviess County election.

Rigdon's account of the event demonstrated the vehement distrust with which both sides viewed the other. He identified William Peniston, a non-Mormon running for office, as a colonel in the Daviess County militia and one of the first to oppose Mormon settlement at Adam-ondi-Ahman earlier that same year. Prior to the election, Lyman Wight, who had overseen the settlement of the Saints in Daviess County, questioned the candidate on his opinion of the religious community. At that point, Peniston claimed a favorable impression of the Saints by saying, "he had been deceived by false reports, without being acquainted with the people; and, since he had become acquainted with them, he found that they were first rate citizens."⁴⁷ However, by election day, Peniston readily expressed a serious change in attitude. When he addressed a crowd that had gathered outside the polls, he referred to the religious group as "G—d d—n Mormons" who "were no more fit to vote than the d—d niggers." Such vitriolic language inflamed the Missourians who listened and surely angered the Mormons too. The comparison of the religious group to slaves and free blacks, who were both disenfranchised and enjoyed few legal rights at the time, demonstrated the disregard with which Missourians viewed Mormons.

In March 1839, Lyman Wight filed a petition to Missouri's Supreme Court containing his account of unfair treatment of himself and other Saints by Missourians from August to November 1838. He claimed he was a "lawful citizen" of Davies County, and during the month of August 1838 "whilst peaceably at work on his farm, he

⁴⁷ Rigdon, *An Appeal to the American People*, p. 16.

was threatened day by day by the citizens of Davies county that if he did not deny his religion they would either exterminate him or drive him from the county.”⁴⁸ Likely, this incident occurred following the Election Day Brawl and confirmed religion contributed to the maltreatment of Mormons prior to and during the Mormon War. Wight confessed he believed the threat against him was by “some few foul perpetrators until some time in the month of August, when they not only met from that county, but from other counties, with an armed force of rising 300 rank and file...and marched within two and a half miles of [his] house.” Assisted by other members of the Church, Wight and his property were not harmed, but the mob disbanded only after General Atchison and General Doniphan, who headed the Missouri militia, regained control of the “lawless band” and dispersed them. Wight’s insistence that he, as a member of the Mormon Church, lived within the law while Missouri citizens threatened him with mob action provided another example of the use of republican language by both sides to justify their actions.

Heightened tensions following the fight in Gallatin also resulted in Mormon action against Missourians they believed were tormenting the Saints. Adam Black, a Daviess County judge, swore a deposition to William Dryden, a justice of the peace for Daviess County, recounting an unsettling confrontation between a group of Mormons and he and his family. Black testified that two days after the election, on August 8, 1838, “an armed force of men, said to be 154...surrounded his house & family, and threatened him with instant death, if he did not sign a certain instrument of writing...not to molest the people called Mormons.”⁴⁹ Black revealed the Mormons “intended to make every citizen

⁴⁸ Greene, *Expulsion of the Mormons*, p. 29.

⁴⁹ Mormon War Papers, 1837-1841, Missouri State Archives, Jefferson City, Missouri, Box 1, Folder 10, Document 17, p. 1.

of said County sign such obligation, and further saith they intended to have satisfaction for abuse they received on Monday previous.” More disturbing than a promise of recompense for their grievances was the warning that “they [Mormons] would not submit to the laws.” As someone who worked in the court system with the purpose of upholding the law, Black’s connection with the Missourian attempt to hinder Mormons from exercising their right to vote and as a target of Mormon anger was doubly problematic. If he did participate in suppressing citizens from voting, he had betrayed the law. Conversely, if Mormons threatened to disregard the law, Black would be responsible to hold them accountable to local and state laws. No matter the extent of Black’s involvement, his role as a judge made him vulnerable to criticism and judgment from both sides.

Missourians petitioned the Missouri Governor Lilburn Boggs in the weeks leading up to the Mormon war in October. Three citizens, Daniel Ashby (a state senator), James Keyte, and Sterling Price (of Missouri Civil War fame) wrote to Boggs on September 1, 1838, regarding “reports, which are constantly coming in concerning the hostile intentions of the Mormons and their allies.”⁵⁰ The men lived in Brunswick, Chariton County, Missouri, which was settled on the northern bank of the Grand River while De Witt was on the northern bank of the Missouri River in neighboring Carroll County. Separated by only a few miles, the two villages were populated by two very different populations of non-Mormons and Mormons respectively. The letter presented information explaining the Mormon connection with Native Americans—“that they have ingratiated themselves with the Indians to assist them in their diabolical career.” They

⁵⁰ Mormon War Papers, Box 1, Folder 11, Document 18, p. 1.

explained that Nathan Marsh, a dissenter from the Mormon Church, lived among them in Brunswick and testified to the purposes and motives of the religious group and their connection to the Native American tribes to the west. Marsh claimed, “Joseph Smith, the prophet, stated, in a public discourse, that he had fourteen thousand men, not belonging to the Church, ready, at a moment’s warning (which was generally understood to mean Indians).” The purpose of the partnership was to destroy Missourians and pave the way for a Mormon takeover of the area. Marsh reported the Mormons believed “the time had arrived, when all the wicked should be destroyed from the face of the earth, and that the Indians would be the principal means by which this object would be accomplished.”

Besides the threat of a Mormon alliance with Native Americans, the three men reported political and religious problems as issues they felt were concerning to the peace of the area. Ashby, Keyte, and Price warned the Governor that people were “greatly excited” due to their proximity to the Mormons and were concerned for their safety. The three men explained that Missourians believed the Mormons only lacked a signal for when to attack non-members. When the confrontation finally began, “the flying or destroying Angel will go through the land and work the general destruction of all that are non-Mormons.”⁵¹ This reference demonstrated Missourians were aware of the millennial language used by Mormons and the expectation of the religious group that they would escape the destruction they believed was imminent when Christ returned. The three men also claimed, “[the] fanatics...will be highly destructive in character, and at once subversive [for] the rights and liberties of the people,” combining the religious

⁵¹ Mormon War Papers, Box 1, Folder 11, Document 18, p 2.

convictions of Mormons with rights protected by the government.⁵² While discussing the situation with Marsh, he informed the men, “There is a common feeling amongst them, amounting to a conspiracy to protect one another against the Civic officers of the county, even if it should be attended with death.” The letter ended with the three men offering their service if Boggs decided to call out the militia to protect Missourians and their property and lives from members of the Mormon Church. As tensions increased during the late summer and fall of 1838, both Mormons and Missourians continued to conflate religious language with republican ideology and the responsibilities of the government to protect the rights of the people.

Citizens of Daviess and Livingston County also petitioned Governor Boggs in September 1838 about clashes with their Mormon neighbors. They asked for assistance from the state as “legitimate citizens of Missouri” for protection from the “fanatics” of Far West.⁵³ The citizens lamented their “helpless and defenceless condition and asked the Govenor for aid because he was “well acquainted with the character of those people called Mormons,” since he had served as Lieutenant Governor during the Jackson County conflict in 1833.⁵⁴ They argued, “the Mormons have and keep a lawless armed force stationed in our County and are constantly throwing out menaces, threats and challenges to our Citizens.”⁵⁵ The letter referenced the Mormon threat to Adam Black as well as the kidnapping of a Missouri family by Mormons, who were described as “those Imposterous Rebels,” as well as offering a plea for military support to protect them from armed bands

⁵² Mormon War Papers, Box 1, Folder 11, Document 18, p 1.

⁵³ Mormon War Papers, Box 1, Folder 13, Document 20, p. 1.

⁵⁴ Mormon War Papers, Box 1, Folder 13, Document 20, p. 2.

⁵⁵ Mormon War Papers, Box 1, Folder 13, Document 20, p. 1.

of Mormons.⁵⁶ In addition to questioning their legitimacy as citizens, the petitioners also rejected the Mormon religion. The letter ended with the statement, “our anticipations are blasted unless we can get rid of those Cannadian Refugees and Emmissarries of the Prince of Darkness.”⁵⁷ Dryden echoed the sentiments of these Missouri residents by explaining to Boggs in a letter dated September 15, “the Mormons are so numerous, and so well armed within the limits of the Counties of Caldwell and Daviess, that the power of the County is wholly unable to execute any Civil or Criminal process.”⁵⁸ Dryden also warned, “they also declare they are independent” of the law and refused to work within it. John Sapp, a defected Mormon and former member of the Danites, supported Dryden’s claim with information the Danites intended to assassinate anyone who spoke out against Joseph Smith or Lyman Wight.⁵⁹ With the threat of lawlessness and armed action, B. M. Lisle, the Adjutant General of the Missouri Militia, sent correspondence to General David Atchison of Richmond, Captain Childs of Boonville, General Lucas of Independence, and General Bolton, General Clark, and Major General Growther of the militia’s 6th, 1st, and 5th Divisions respectively to be prepared at any time to come to the aid of Daviess County residents and restore order to the state.⁶⁰

On September 20, 1838, the same day Missourians drove between 70 and 100 families from their homes at De Witt in Carroll County, Atchison wrote to Governor Boggs from Liberty to explain the situation in northwest Missouri. Atchison claimed all

⁵⁶ Mormon War Papers, Box 1, Folder 13, Document 20, p. 2.

⁵⁷ Mormon War Papers, Box 1, Folder 13, Document 20, p. 3.

⁵⁸ Mormon War Papers, Box 1, Folder 16, Document 23, p. 3.

⁵⁹ Mormon War Papers, Box 1, Folder 12, Document 19, p. 2.

⁶⁰ Mormon War Papers, Box 1, Folder 18, Document 27, pp. 1-5.

those who had broken the law had been arrested and brought before a court, but tension remained high between the Mormons and Missourians. He explained, “The Mormons of Daviess County...were encamped in a Town called Adam Diamon, and are headed by Lyman Wight, a bold, brave skillful, and I may add desperate man.”⁶¹ Although he believed the Mormons were acting on the offensive, he also thought the Missouri residents were right to request help from the State. He argued, “their [Mormon] fanaticism and their unalterable determination not to be driven, much blood will be spilt, and much suffering endured, if a blow is once struck without the interposition of your excellency.”⁶² Atchison admitted his initial reluctance to respond to requests by Missourians for military support. However, he disclosed to Boggs, “I was urged [to respond] by citizens of the most respectable class in the county of Clay...and I have now no doubt of the propriety of the measure. It has prevented blood being shed...[and] convinced the Mormons, that the law will be enforced.”⁶³ Atchison’s military position in combination with his work as a lawyer and a state senator all influenced his analysis of events during the weeks leading up to and during the Mormon War. While leaders and participants on both sides of the conflict decried the other’s lack of adherence to the law, Atchison retained the respect of both Missourians and Mormons for his refusal to allow personal beliefs to interfere with his position of power.

When increasing tensions finally exploded into full-fledged physical violence on October 25, 1838, at the Battle of Crooked River, Missouri political leaders were forced

⁶¹ Mormon War Papers, Box 1, Folder 21, Document 30, p. 4.

⁶² Mormon War Papers, Box 1, Folder 21, Document 30, p. 3.

⁶³ Mormon War Papers, Box 1, Folder 21, Document 30, pp. 3-4.

to respond. Austin King, a judge of the Fifth Circuit Court headquartered in Richmond, Missouri, reported in a letter published in the *St. Louis Argus*, “Our relations with the Mormons are such that I am perfectly satisfied that the arm of the civil authority is too weak to give peace to the country.”⁶⁴ He urged the state government to respond in full force and claimed, “it is utterly useless for the civil authorities to pretend to interpose.” He warned, “something will shortly have to be done.” King included mention of several atrocities performed by Mormons against their Missouri neighbors, such as physical threats, destruction of crops, salting fields, burning public buildings, and confiscating personal property. The judge insisted these rampaging Mormons performed their actions upon orders from Church leadership and with an overwhelming belief they carried out God’s mission. He noted the merchandise and property Mormon vigilantes stole were deposited into a “store-house near their camp” and declared a “consecration to the Lord.”⁶⁵ King’s article provided further evidence that Mormon vigilante action in late 1838 constituted both a political and religious role. Attacks on Missourians by Mormons removed unwanted residents and cleansed the area. In addition, those attacks took the place of what Mormons believed was a failure by the government to provide adequate protection of political rights for all citizens, not just non-Mormons. While Missourians viewed Mormon actions as criminal, Mormons believed them to be necessary, consecrated, and justified to protect their way of life.

During September and most of October, the Missouri militia primarily protected Missourians and Mormons from each other and reestablished order regardless of the

⁶⁴ *St. Louis Argus*, November 8, 1838, 1-5.

⁶⁵ *St. Louis Argus*, November 8, 1838, 1-5.

religious beliefs on either side, although that grew increasingly more difficult as both sides threatened the other and attempted to defend their property. Black provided an affidavit a day before the Battle of Crooked River that provided some explanation for how tense the situation had grown between the two groups. As a justice of the peace of Daviess County, he was understandably concerned with the instability in northwest Missouri as Mormons and Missourians sparred with each other. He testified, “Mr. Henry Lee [was] driven from his house...he stated that the Mormons came to his house and ordered him to leave immediately, or he would suffer, that he [was] in danger, that there [was] a general insurrection [that was] going to take place, and he had better get a way.”⁶⁶ Lee was threatened on October 11 and fled his home four days later. Black also claimed Caldwell County Mormons provided assistance to Daviess County Saints, which angered Daviess County citizens. He explained, “the citizens of Caldwell were paraded in Far West for the purpose of marching to Daviess County to drive all of the Citizens out of that County that were not friendly towards them” on October 18, a week after Lee was initially threatened. The situation in Daviess County continued to deteriorate as armed groups on both sides drove men and women from their homes, robbed and burned stores and other businesses, and stole cattle and hogs from their neighbors. Black ended his testimony with a plea to the state government to intervene again and restore order under the law. He declared there was “not a single officer left in said county, to execute the laws of our land. And in behalf of the citizens of said County, and in my own behalf, ask

⁶⁶ Mormon War Papers, Box 1, Folder 45, Document 55, p. 1.

of the Executive of the state, to be rein-stated in Our homes, and the necessary and legal steps to be taken to recover our property, and bring the offenders to Justice.”⁶⁷

The State of Missouri’s response to the crisis was immediate and resulted in a swift end to the Mormon War. Once the first battle occurred, government officials were less concerned with providing protection for the persecuted religious group; instead, they sought to dispel the crisis transpiring in the northwest corner of the state and restore a state of peace and order. On October 26, 1838, Governor Boggs wrote to Colonel Joseph Hawkins about the need to raise a company of soldiers by the first day of November to provide “Executive protection and [for Daviess residents] to be reinstated to their homes.”⁶⁸ The following day, on October 27, 1838, he issued the infamous “extermination order,” (officially Executive Order 44) that stated Mormons should be viewed “as enemies, and must be exterminated or driven from the state if necessary for the public peace.”⁶⁹ LeSueur examined Boggs’ possible intentions for issuing this order, ranging from weariness of Missouri government leaders over the continued disruptive force of Mormons within the state’s borders to his desire to frighten Mormon settlers into leaving the state under their own volition. Boggs claimed he had “acted under orders” during the 1833 campaign to restore peace to the ravaged county and justified his involvement as upholding his duties as a political figure, which also likely influenced his actions in 1838.⁷⁰ His decisions during each campaign resulted in intense disapproval by

⁶⁷ Mormon War Papers, Box 1, Folder 45, Document 55, p. 4.

⁶⁸ Lilburn W. Boggs, Letter to Joseph Hawkins, October 26, 1838, Hawkins Family Papers, Western Historical Manuscripts, University of Missouri-Columbia, C0332.

⁶⁹ Lilburn W. Boggs, General Order to General John B. Clark, October 1838, Missouri War Papers, Missouri State Archives, Jefferson City, Missouri, 61.

⁷⁰ *Missouri Intelligencer*, December 14, 1833, 1-1.

the Mormon population. Governor Boggs expressed his desire to reestablish order several times in his correspondence with militia leaders during the days of the Mormon War and assured them of his confidence in their ability to adequately carry out the task. On November 1, 1838, he instructed Major General Clark to “therefore proceed without delay to execute the former orders...take whatever steps you deem necessary and such as the circumstances of the case may seem to demand to subdue the insurgents and give peace and quiet to the country.”⁷¹ Boggs ordered, “The ringleaders of the rebellion should be made an example of and if it should become necessary for the public peace the Mormons should be exterminated or expelled from the State.”⁷²

Despite the governor’s call for peace, the Haun’s Mill Massacre, which occurred on October 30, 1838, showed how badly law and order broke down in the midst of miscommunication, anger, and fear. Daniel Ashby, who had expressed his concerns about the Mormon settlement of De Witt to Governor Boggs in early September, served as a Major in the Missouri militia during the event and provided his view of the horrific incident that left seventeen Mormon men and boys dead and seven Missourians wounded. He claimed, “as soon as the line of battle was formed and before all the troop in the line had dismounted the fire commenced,” insinuating that the Mormons fired first and before it was proper to do so.⁷³ He recounted running toward the cabin where Mormons were hidden and defending himself from attack as he approached the building. Ashby described the chaos during which he saw his fellow militiamen firing through gaps in the

⁷¹ Mormon War Papers, Box 2, Folder 8, Document 69, p. 1.

⁷² Mormon War Papers, Box 2, Folder 8, Document 69, pp. 1-2.

⁷³ Mormon War Papers, Box 2, Folder 13, Document 96, p. 1.

cabin's walls and "Kept up such a constant fire that the Mormons could not get their guns out to shoot." As the Mormon men fled from the cabin and attempted to escape, Ashby argued he tried to call for a cease fire that was rejected by more shots from the retreating Mormons. As a result, the militia continued firing "as long as there was any Mormon in sight except the wounded."⁷⁴ Despite testaments and accounts from Mormon women who witnessed the massacre from the relative safety of the woods, Ashby did not mention the slaughter of two boys, aged nine and ten, by a Missouri man who called Mormons nits and lice.⁷⁵ Frequent references to Mormons as fanatics, deluded beings, and threats to Missourians combined with Boggs' repeated orders to exterminate the religious group was actualized at Haun's Mill.

Justifiable outrage by the Mormons over the Haun's Mill Massacre continued long after the War ended. Joseph Young, a resident of the settlement, told of the "bloody tragedy" that occurred while he was "treading my native soil, and breathing republican air."⁷⁶ He described being apprehended as he attempted to travel across northwest Missouri by armed men who told him "we were Mormons, and that every one who adhered to our religious faith would have to leave the State in ten days or *renounce* their religion."⁷⁷ Young claimed the Missouri militia fired first after "their leader, Mr. Comstock, fired a gun, which was followed by a solemn pause of ten or twelve seconds, when, all at once, they discharged about 100 rifles." Young fled the scene and hid until the fight was over before returning to the mill to survey the damage and help bury the

⁷⁴ Mormon War Papers, Box 2, Folder 13, Document 96, p. 2.

⁷⁵ See Spencer, *The Missouri Mormon Experience*, p. 106.

⁷⁶ Greene, *Expulsion of the Mormons*, p. 21.

⁷⁷ Greene, *Expulsion of the Mormons*, p. 22.

dead. He recorded the condition of the deceased, including Mr. McBrides who had been shot with his own gun “and then cut to pieces with a corn cutter” and “Sardius Smith...about 9 years old” whose head was “literally blown off.”⁷⁸ Such violence and disregard for human life was unfathomable by the Mormons who witnessed the massacre at Haun’s Mill, especially when they believed they were law-abiding citizens of the republic, regardless of their religious faith.

By the first week of November 1838, the military conflict in northwest Missouri had ended and the commanding Brigadier General of Missouri forces, dispersed his troops.⁷⁹ The *St. Louis Argus* reported the end of conflict and rejoiced over the swift actions of the State to put down the rebellion. “Much suffering has been prevented...the Mormons probably thought exemplary vengeance would come down on their heads.”⁸⁰ The Missouri government’s immediate response to physical violence within its borders and the relatively low casualty count demonstrated the importance of peace and order to the State’s governing bodies and the citizens who supported Governor Boggs and the Missouri militia. Not surprisingly, Mormons viewed the events much differently and disagreed about the legality of the State’s actions. John P. Greene, who published an account of the conflict in 1839, argued, “It must be constantly recollected, that the Mormons in Caldwell county considered themselves, as they really were, the *regular State Militia*, acting under the command of county officers and by the advice of General’s

⁷⁸ Greene, *Expulsion of the Mormons*, p. 23.

⁷⁹ Green White, Letter to Officers, November 8, 1838, Hawkins Family Papers, Western Historical Manuscripts, University of Missouri-Columbia, C0332.

⁸⁰ *St. Louis Argus*, November 16, 1838, 1-1.

Doniphan and Parks, for the purpose of putting down a mob.”⁸¹ He claimed, “*They had never opposed or thought of opposing the authorities of the State, or of any county. They had in every instance agreed to keep the peace against the lawless violence, as citizens, not as Mormons.*” He believed, “It was not against the State, but for the State, not against Law, but to maintain Law, that they armed.” Governor Boggs and Major General Clark disagreed. Boggs declared the Mormons “in the attitude of an open and avowed defiance of the laws.”⁸² Clark claimed, “[Mormons] have always been the aggressors—you have brought upon yourselves these difficulties by being disaffected, and not being subject to rule—and my advice is that you become as other citizens.”⁸³ In addition, he urged Mormons to return to republican ideals by wishing he “could invoke the spirit of the unknown God to rest upon you, and deliver you from that awful chain of superstition, and liberate you from those the fetters of fanaticism with which you are bound.” For Missouri leaders, the Mormon faith played a determining factor in what they considered lawless actions of the religious group; thus, Missourians also viewed religion as a crucial aspect of the Mormon War.

Although the Missouri government engaged in combat against the community of Saints, the importance of upholding the law resulted in a protracted legal trial for the Mormon leaders following the surrender of Smith and other Mormon leaders. Despite the questionable legality of Smith’s arrest, he and several other Church leaders were jailed and awaited trial in Liberty Jail in Clay County, Missouri, where Mormons had

⁸¹ Greene, *Expulsion of the Mormons*, p. 24.

⁸² Greene, *Expulsion of the Mormons*, p. 26.

⁸³ Greene, *Expulsion of the Mormons*, p. 27.

earlier received refuge following the 1833 conflict. From the seclusion of Liberty Jail, Smith declared his arrest as a “testimony for Jesus” and sought to comfort the saddened Mormons across the northwest portion of the state.⁸⁴ As a pall fell over the Mormon dream of a Missouri Zion, Saints could remember Smith’s April 1838 revelation in which he urged his followers to “arise and shine forth that thy light may be a standard for the nations and that thy gathering together upon the land of Zion...may be for a defence and for a refuge from the storm and from the wrath when it shall be poured out...upon the whole earth.”⁸⁵ Despite their failure in Missouri, Saints continued to expect the eventual establishment of the Millennial Kingdom and unrelentingly supported their spiritual leader against religious and political foes.

In spite of the injustices Missouri residents felt they had suffered at the hands of the Mormons, one Liberty resident insisted, “You may rest assured that the Mormons will receive justice from the people of upper Missouri.”⁸⁶ Austin King was set to preside over the Mormon trial and was perceived by many to be the best possible option for a fair judgment. On March 22, 1839, the *St. Louis Argus* reported, “Judge King treated the Mormons with the consideration and justice due to prisoners,” and the defendants desired no change of venue or special privilege.⁸⁷ However, by mid-April, Smith and the other religious leaders requested a change of venue, and Boone County became the new location for the highly anticipated Mormon trial.

⁸⁴ Faulring, *An American Prophet’s Record*, p. 215.

⁸⁵ Faulring, *An American Prophet’s Record*, p. 177.

⁸⁶ *St. Louis Argus*, April 12, 1839, 1-2.

⁸⁷ *St. Louis Argus*, March 22, 1839, 2-2.

Many possibilities existed for why Smith asked for the change, many of which alluded to the importance of religious and political liberty desired by Mormons. Boone County Court records indicate Mormons requested a switch to Boone County because Judge King was “too close to the case,” despite earlier reported comments to the contrary.⁸⁸ Inflammatory language that labeled Mormons as “not having the fear of God in their hearts nor weighing their Allegiance, but being moved and seduced by the instigation of the Devil” almost certainly contributed to Mormon concerns regarding fairness in the courts. Charges ranging from arson to inciting a riot to treason against the United States attacked the very foundation of Mormon interest in perpetuating their religious and political freedoms as they sought to establish a Missouri Zion. Mormon expectations of increased persecution prior to Christ’s return failed to include a plan to counteract government intervention in their struggle. The inability of the Danite band to protect the larger Mormon community from Gentile persecution coupled with an outright defeat in a military engagement necessitated further Mormon action outside the realm of accepted legal deeds.

In May 1839, the *St. Louis Argus* reported Joseph Smith “with his fellow fugitives” escaped from custody during the transfer from Liberty to Boone County and “arrived at Quincy, Ill., where most of his [Smith’s] followers have assembled since their departure from our [Missouri’s] borders.”⁸⁹ With his escape, Smith confirmed the fears of many Missourians that he represented a threat to Missouri’s ideals and respect for the law. At the same time, Smith’s escape provided Mormons with another chance to found

⁸⁸ Missouri, Boone County. Circuit Court Records, 1839, Western Historical Manuscripts, University of Missouri-Columbia, C2690.

⁸⁹ *St. Louis Argus*, May 3, 1839, 2-5 and *St. Louis Argus*, May 10, 1839, 1-2.

Zion in preparation for Christ's return. For the Mormon leader, answering God's call to establish the land of promise superseded commitment to temporal law. Instead, the actions of Smith and the larger Mormon community during the 1830s spoke to the importance of religious duty as the ultimate authority for living. While the laws of the land buttressed religious goals, Mormons followed them without issue. When the two conflicted, the call to follow Mormon doctrine superseded man's law.

Conclusion

On April 22, 1839, an entry was written in Joseph Smith's journal recording the momentous event, "President Smith and his fellow prisoners, arrived safe at Quincy Ill. on ~~Tuesday~~ <Monday> the 22nd of April and spent all next day greeting and receiving visits from his brethren and friends—" ¹ After Smith escaped from Missouri guards en route from Liberty to Columbia, he joined the bulk of the Mormon faithful on the east bank of the Mississippi River. Over the next several years, the Saints built a new home at Commerce, Illinois, which was renamed Nauvoo, the beautiful place. For the war-weary, frustrated, and disappointed group, the new settlement provided an escape from the persecution, harassment, and mistreatment by Missourians who rejected the religious community and forced them from Zion's borders. In the years following expulsion from Missouri, Nauvoo grew into a thriving city where Mormons lived, worshiped, and constructed a new temple that ushered in a new era for the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints. With the opening of the temple came the development of ordinances and theological concepts that skewed Mormons further from mainstream Protestant denominations.

Although the Mormon War in Missouri lasted less than two weeks and casualties remained few, the bitterness on both sides lasted well into the future. As they had after the Jackson County conflict in 1833, the Saints sought redress from the State of Missouri and the federal government for loss of property in Caldwell, Daviess, and Carroll counties. They also decried Governor Boggs and members of the Missouri militia for persecution and unlawful treatment. Smith defended himself from accusations he had

¹ Smith (journal), *The Joseph Smith Papers*, April 22-23, 1839, p. 336.

ordered an assassination attempt on Boggs.² Even though the Saints no longer lived in Missouri, a sense of persecution continued as the community met resistance and skepticism from their Illinois neighbors as well. Following the cessation of the Mormon War, Missouri leadership sought to punish the perpetrators and follow the rule of law, although the Saints disagreed they were treated fairly. Missouri judge Austin King found, “there is probable cause to believe that Joseph Smith, Jr Lyman Wight, Hiram Smith, Alexander McRay & Caleb Baldwin are guilty of Overt acts of Treason in Daviess County” and remanded them to Liberty Jail.³ Peter Burnett recalled his role in helping defend Smith and other Church leaders fairly in their trials, with the help of Atchison and Doniphan, as well as his service in the Liberty Blues during the Mormon War. He claimed the Church leaders received a fair trial arguing, “The proceedings occupied some days, as a great number of witnesses were examined, and their testimony was taken down in writing, as the statute required.”⁴ In addition, the Mormon War Papers include several testimonies from Missouri witnesses to Mormon crimes, as well as evidence from Mormon dissenters and Mormon witnesses defending the actions of the Saints.

County histories and memoirs by Missourians published years after the events in Jackson, Caldwell, and Daviess counties often refer to the Mormon difficulties and the offensive nature of the religious group. A history of George R. Smith, the founder of Sedalia, Missouri, was published in 1904 and echoed many of the sentiments Missourians expressed during the conflict itself. The author identified George Smith as “truly

² LeSueur, *The 1838 Mormon War in Missouri*, p. 259.

³ Mormon War Papers, Box 2, Folder 27, p. 2.

⁴ Burnett, *Recollections and Opinions of an Old Pioneer*, p. 63.

America” during the “so-called ‘Mormon War’.”⁵ While the history suggested both Missourians and Mormons were to blame for the conflict, the author also argued, “the tenets and practices of these ‘Latter Day Saints’ were so obnoxious to the people of Missouri that, when the struggle was once begun, a wave of enthusiasm for war swept over the State.”⁶ Like Burnett, George Smith took part in the conflict when he enrolled in a company organized from Pettis County that participated in the State’s action against the Church. After the Mormon War, he was awarded a position by Governor Boggs as a “Brigadier-General in command of the troops of Cooper, Benton, Pettis, and Saline counties,” a force organized “largely due to the fear that the Mormons would not quietly abide by their agreement [to leave the state].”⁷ This fear that Mormons would disregard the laws and wreak havoc in Missouri echoed long after the conflict ended in November 1838. The fear was not limited to Missouri or the United States. Religious and secular newspapers from distant areas compared Mormonism to “Mohammedism” and exposed “Joe Smith” as a charlatan, liar, and swindler. An 1843 article published in Dublin, Ireland, entitled “Mormonism, or, New Mohammedanism in England and America,” depicted Mormonism as “a creed full of the most palpable falsehoods and glaring inconsistencies, exercising an influence not inferior to that of Islamism at its first

⁵ Samuel Bannister Harding, *Life of George R. Smith, Founder of Sedalia, MO, in Its Relations to the Political, Economic, and Social Life of Southwestern Missouri, Before and During the Civil War*, (Sedalia, MO: Privately Printed, 1904), p. 58.

⁶ Harding, *Life of George R. Smith*, p. 59.

⁷ Harding, *Life of George R. Smith*, p. 60.

promulgation” and demonstrated that Mormonism failed to gain the acceptance other Protestant denominations did by the early 1840s.⁸

While non-Mormon sources defended the actions of those who sought to discredit the Saints, Mormon sources were replete with righteous anger and claims of persecution. For years following the war, Mormon men and women wrote and spoke in ways that emphasized the mistreatment the Saints suffered at the hands of Missourians who insisted they were acting within the law. An article dated March 16, 1839, from the *Quincy Argus* opened John P. Greene’s *Facts Relative to the Expulsion of the Mormons from the State of Missouri* with a scathing summary of the events in Missouri. The article posited the concern, “whether we are living under a *Constitution and Laws*, or have not rather returned to the *ruthless* times” when lawlessness prevailed.⁹ Greene pled, “Fellow Citizens and Brethren! Turn not a deaf ear to this cry of the oppressed! The Mormons are outlawed, exiled, robbed;—they ask of your justice and your charity and that you befriend them.”¹⁰ Smith, Rigdon, and Smith’s brother, acting as the First Presidency, wrote on May 17, 1839, “We have not at any time thought there was any political party as such, chargeable with the Missouri barbarities, neither any religious society as such.”¹¹ In other words, no one political or religious affiliation was to blame. Instead, “They were committed by a mob, composed of all parties, regardless of all differences of opinion,

⁸ “Mormonism, or, New Mohammedanism in England and America,” *Dublin University Magazine*, v. 21, no. 123, pp. 283-298, p. 283.

⁹ Greene, *Expulsion of the Mormons*, p. 1.

¹⁰ Greene, *Expulsion of the Mormons*, p. iv.

¹¹ Greene, *Expulsion of the Mormons*, p. iv.

either political or religious.” In the face of such widespread persecution, the Mormon faith underwent dramatic changes following expulsion from Missouri.

In this midst of resettlement in Illinois and frustrated attempts to gain redress for property losses in Missouri, Smith and other leaders continued to guide the community of Saints and implement the revelations and divine directions they received, many of which drove the Mormon Church further afield from mainstream Protestantism. In the July 1838 edition of the *Elders' Journal*, elders of the Church answered questions regarding Mormon doctrine. Those questions included, “Do the Mormons believe in having more wives than one.”¹² The answer was a firm, “No, not at the same time.” However, continued revelations in Nauvoo led to the open practice of plural marriage and families only a few years after expulsion from Missouri. On July 12, 1843, Smith received a revelation on “the subject of the principle and doctrine[e] of their having many wives, and concubines,” which also clarified and laid the foundation for celestial marriage and eternal families.¹³ The development of these theological concepts inherently differentiated Mormonism from Baptist, Methodist, Presbyterian, and Campbellite denominations and reaffirmed the unique stance of the Mormon Church in antebellum American religion in much the same way the Book of Mormon did in 1830.

The Mormon practices of celestial marriage and eternal families stemmed in part from Smith's 1836 revelation concerning the structure of Heaven and the three levels reserved for those of differing stages of faith. Given during the time of the onset of the endowment in Kirtland, the revelation promised the rewards of the celestial kingdom, the

¹² "Elders' Journal, July 1838," The Joseph Smith Papers, p. 42.

¹³ "Revelation, 12 July 1843 [D&C 132]," p. 1-8, The Joseph Smith Papers, <http://www.josephsmithpapers.org/paper-summary/revelation-12-july-1843-dc-132/1>, p. 1.

highest level of Heaven, to those who remained loyal and steadfast to the Mormon faith during their time on Earth. In the 1843 revelation, celestial marriage required a legal marriage that was accompanied by a sacred sealing binding the husband and wife together for eternity. In addition, a sealing resulted in a special blessing that carried into the afterlife. Smith revealed, “in time and through all Eternity...when they are out of the world and they Shall pass by the angels and the Gods...Then Shall they be Gods, because they have no end.”¹⁴ Other Protestant denominations would have rejected this revelation for many reasons; most notably, Protestants believe marriage ends at death, so an eternal sealing of a husband and wife could not occur. In addition, many Protestants would have balked at the insinuation that men and women could become gods, even if they agreed with the promise of eternal life after an earthly death.¹⁵

The July 1843 revelation provided a series of instructions for the legitimacy and establishment of plural marriage that depended on accordance with religious laws. Plural marriage was not supposed to justify or legitimize adultery, so specific guidelines explained what was acceptable and what was not as the doctrine was implemented. The revelation indicated women must not be already involved with another man at the time of the sealing—“Verily verily I Say unto you if a man receiveth a wife in the new and Everlasting covenant and if She be with another man and I have not appointed unto her by the holy anointing She hath committed adultery and Shall be destroyed.”¹⁶ The same was true for men, who were not to take another woman who was already married to a

¹⁴ "Revelation, 12 July 1843 [D&C 132]," The Joseph Smith Papers, p. 3.

¹⁵ The doctrine of Celestial Marriage is also supported by the modern LDS Doctrine and Covenants, Section 131.

¹⁶ "Revelation, 12 July 1843 [D&C 132]," The Joseph Smith Papers, p. 5.

different man. If that occurred, then the man's wife was considered free from the man who took another wife, thus allowing her to be sealed to a man who had not committed adultery. The marriage sealing was essential to plural marriage and provided the foundation for what was considered adultery and what was a divine commandment. This was explained in the revelation with "whatsoever you seal on earth Shall be Sealed in heaven, and whatsoever you bind on earth in my name and by my word Saith the Lord it Shall be eternally bound in the heavens."¹⁷ Celestial and plural marriages also resulted in the continuity of families past life on Earth. The offspring from sealed marriages followed the couple into the afterlife and established eternal families. While the importance of family would not have seemed foreign or unbiblical to Protestant mainstream groups, the continuation of the family into the afterlife would have.

Smith offered a warning to the Saints in the July revelation that provided radical adjustments to marriage and the composition of families on Earth and in the afterlife. He revealed God's plan for "a new and an everlasting covenant, and if ye abide not that covenant, then are ye damned; for no one can reject this covenant, and be permitted to enter into my glory."¹⁸ This may have been included to circumvent opposition to what the leaders likely realized would be a highly contentious theological development, but revelations were considered divine and, thus, direct instructions from God by the Mormon faithful. Smith and other Church leaders understood the volatile potential of the revelation, which contained instructions to Emma Smith, Joseph's first wife, to accept the

¹⁷ "Revelation, 12 July 1843 [D&C 132]," The Joseph Smith Papers, p. 6.

¹⁸ "Revelation, 12 July 1843 [D&C 132]," The Joseph Smith Papers, p. 1.

religious command and “to abide and cleave unto my Servent Joseph; and to none else.”¹⁹ If she did not submit to plural marriage and her husband taking multiple wives, she would be “destroyed.” Prior revelations aimed at individual Saints were not uncommon if Church leaders were aware of a problem within the community, so the pointed guidelines for Emma Smith would not have seemed abnormal as part of divine instruction.

Although plural marriage grew into the most problematic religious doctrine for those outside the Mormon Church, baptism for the dead, which was revealed on January 19, 1841, also demonstrated how Mormon theology diverged from mainstream Protestant groups following the Missouri period. The revelation for this practice established baptism for the dead as part of the Church’s attempt to establish Zion, even after forced removal from Missouri. The revelation began with instructions to build another temple in Nauvoo, in which the temple ordinances would be established, including the sacramental baptism for the dead. Once the temple was finished, “your baptisms for your dead, shall not be acceptable unto me, and if you do not these things, at the end of the appointment, ye shall be rejected as a church, with your dead.”²⁰ While the Christian Bible does refer to baptism for the dead in 1 Corinthians, mainstream Protestant groups did not accept the practice during the antebellum period. Because the Saints believed the Mormon faith was a restoration of true Christianity and that the church had been corrupted with the passage of time, baptism for the dead allowed for members of the Church to engage in proxy baptism that allowed for their ancestors to receive the fullness of the gospel as it was

¹⁹ "Revelation, 12 July 1843 [D&C 132]," The Joseph Smith Papers, p. 7.

²⁰ "Revelation, 19 January 1841 [D&C 124]," p. 1-15, The Joseph Smith Papers, <http://www.josephsmithpapers.org/paper-summary/revelation-19-january-1841-dc-124/1>, p. 4.

revealed to Smith. Once the temple was established, the ritual had to be performed in the sacred space.

Besides providing instructions for temple ordinances and a command to build the Nauvoo Temple, the January 1841 revelation included a diatribe against the mistreatment of Saints in Missouri. The removal of the Church from Jackson County where the Temple Lot was supposed to house the first Mormon temple frustrated plans so that the first was established in Kirtland, Ohio, in March 1836 instead. After Caldwell County was created as a haven for the Saints in December 1836, Smith revealed the new setting for a temple at Far West, but those plans were interrupted by the Mormon War. While Nauvoo promised an escape from oppression in the early years there, the specter of persecution was never too distant. Amidst the command to build a new temple was the promise the Saints would be avenged. In Nauvoo, they would no longer be “hindred by their enemies saith the Lord your God. And I will answer judgment, wrath and i[n]dignation; wailing and anguish, and gnashing of teeth upon them their heads unto the third and fourth generation, so long as they repent not, and hate me saith the Lord your God.”²¹ As long as the Saints remained faithful, God would repay their suffering.

The Missouri period of Mormon history troubled the Saints for decades following the Mormon War. Although the Saints faced persecution and mistreatment in New York, Kirtland, Illinois, and Utah, the harshness with which they were treated throughout the 1830s by their Missouri neighbors seemed particularly heinous to a religious group who insisted they were legally protected from discrimination. Appeals to Governors Dunklin and Boggs and President Jackson failed to gain satisfaction for the Saints for their

²¹ "Revelation, 19 January 1841 [D&C 124]," The Joseph Smith Papers, p. 6.

temporal losses, but the religious persecution they suffered resulted in a much deeper hurt for the Church. The Saints believed they were Americans who enjoyed the same rights and privileges of any other citizens, and they often couched their defense of those rights in republican language. They were met with derision and dismissal by Missourians who claimed the group was deluded, fanatical, and outside the law. By stripping the Saints of a valid religion, Missourians were able to view Mormons as foreigners who were not eligible for the rights and privileges protecting the religious beliefs of American citizens. This was repeated again in Illinois when Smith and his brother Hyrum were assassinated in the Carthage Jail on June 27, 1844, and in Utah in the late 1850s when President Buchanan sent the United States Army in to quell an alleged Mormon rebellion against the nation. As Fluhman argues, the Mormons were dismissed as citizens when their religion was declared as invalid.

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VITA

Angela Bell was born in Maryville, Missouri, and moved to the northeast Missouri town of Novinger at age one. Raised on the family farm, she grew up helping her dad and both grandfathers build fences, riding tractors, playing outdoors, and singing with her older sister in their small Baptist church. Both parents, her grandmother, and several aunts, uncles, and cousins were trained and worked as teachers or professors, and she followed in their footsteps after graduating from Adair County R-I. She earned her BSED in Secondary Education with an emphasis in Social Studies and English from the University of Missouri in 1999 and then her MA in 2001 in History. After teaching high school for two years at Knob Noster R-VIII, she returned to the University of Missouri to pursue her PhD in history, which she received in May 2017. Her research interests have been heavily shaped both by her religious upbringing and desire to learn more about the history of her home state.

Family and personal responsibilities necessitated a move to Houston, Texas, during the course of her doctoral work. There she taught as an adjunct professor for Houston Community College, Lone Star College, and Houston Baptist University, while also serving as an online instructor and course designer for Mizzou Online. In 2014, she was hired as an Assistant Professor of History at Lone Star College and became an Associate Professor in 2016. She also enjoys living near her twin nephews and is an active member of South Main Baptist Church, especially in the music ministry.

If pressed, she would summarize her philosophy on life as follows: Think critically. Love hard. Seek justice. Sing. Sports. Missouri; exiled to Houston.