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THE LIFE AND CONTRIBUTIONS
OF LYMAN WIGHT

A Thesis

Presented to the

Department of Church History and Doctrine

Brigham Young University

In Partial Fulfillment
of the Requirements for the Degree
Master of Arts

by

Philip C. Wightman

August, 1971

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

Statement of the Problem

The purpose of this study is to collect under one cover accounts of the significant events in the life of Lyman Wight and his contributions to The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints.

Justification of the Problem

Lyman Wight was converted to The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints at Kirtland, Ohio, in 1830. Soon after his conversion, he was sent to Missouri and played an important role in the defense of the saints against the mobs. When someone was needed to go to Kirtland and inform the Prophet Joseph Smith that the saints had been driven from Jackson County, Elder Wight was the first to volunteer. After arriving in Kirtland, he was called by the Prophet to help organize and lead Zion's Camp.

Colonel Wight continued to be active in fighting the mobs until the siege of Far West where he was taken captive with Joseph Smith and other leaders of the Church and spent the winter in Liberty Jail with the Prophet.

With the death of Joseph Smith, Lyman refused to follow Brigham Young and the rest of the Twelve Apostles.

Along with a small group of saints, he eventually settled in Texas, where he helped organize five different counties.

After the Church was established in Utah, Brigham Young sent for Lyman to join the saints there, but he refused to come and was therefore disfellowshipped from the Church.

Although Lyman was a close associate of Joseph Smith and held many leadership positions in the Church organized by Joseph, little has been written about this aspect of his life. The only significant studies have dealt with his life and contributions while in Texas. It is therefore significant that a comprehensive study of Lyman Wight be made.

Method of Procedure and Sources of Data

In this study, the principal sources were the Journal History of the Church, located in the Historian's Office of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints at Salt Lake City, Utah, and a special file on Lyman Wight compiled by the Church Historian's Office. The Journal of History, the history of the Reorganized Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints, as found on film at Brigham Young University, was also examined along with personal diaries, journals, letters, genealogies, documents, histories, and pictures. The Documentary History of the Church, compiled and edited by B. H. Roberts, was searched carefully as were the Church periodicals including the Times and Seasons, the Elder's Journal, and the Evening and Morning Star. In addition,

theses and dissertations that were relevant were examined.

Definition of Terms

Several terms used in this writing are peculiar to The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. These terms are as follows:

Church refers to The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints.

Quorum of the Twelve or the Twelve refers to the twelve apostles of the Church.

Saints refers to the members of the Church.

Reorganized Church refers to the Reorganized Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints.

CHAPTER II

EARLY ANCESTORS

The first of the Wight family to immigrate to America arrived in the early 1600's from the Isle of Wight. They left the British Isles because of religious persecution.¹ Thomas Wight landed in Salem, Massachusetts, and his brother landed in Virginia.² In July, 1637, the town of Dedham, Massachusetts, was organized and Thomas' name appears on the records as one of the twelve original inhabitants. In 1652, along with other Dedham residents, he moved a short distance where they settled the town of Medfield.³ It was here that his son Ephraim was born on January 27, 1645. Ephraim moved to Medfield with his father in 1652, where he remained until his death.⁴

Ephraim's son Nathaniel was born September 12, 1678, in Medfield, but he later moved and helped settle Medway, Massachusetts. In 1721, he purchased a large tract of land

¹Danforth Phipps Wight, The Wight Family (Boston: T. R. Marvin, 1848), p. 8.

²Lyman Wight to Wilford Woodruff, August 24, 1857, located in Church Historian's Office, 47 East South Temple Street, Salt Lake City, Utah, hereafter referred to as Wilford Woodruff letter.

³William Ward Wight, The Wights (Milwaukee: Swain and Tate, 1890), p. 1.

⁴Ibid.

in what is now Thompson, Connecticut. When the first meeting house was completed in 1735, Nathaniel and his family were provided with one of the seventeen pews.⁵

Lyman Wight's grandfather, Levi Wight, was born at Medfield on October 24, 1712. He moved with his father, Nathaniel, to Thompson where he took an active part in the fight for religious freedom and the right of the Baptist Church to be established in northern Connecticut.⁶

The story is told of how Jeremiah Barstow came to Thompson proclaiming the doctrine of "believers baptism by immersion." One Sunday, following Reverend Cabot's sermon, he stood and asked for the liberty to relate his beliefs. Mr. Cabot denied his request and had the "presumptuous intruder" removed from the meeting house. He continued to preach outside the church and was arrested and imprisoned for a month. This treatment aroused the public, including Levi and his brothers, Elephalet and John. Meetings were held where the principles taught by Mr. Barstow were discussed which resulted in a considerable number declaring themselves Baptist and refusing to pay rates for the support of Mr. Cabot's church. Levi and the others were arrested, but they brought action against the civil authorities, won

⁵Ellen D. Larned, History of Windham County, Connecticut (Worcester, Mass.: Ellen D. Larned, 1874), I, 180, 317.

⁶Ibid.

their case, and no longer had to pay rates to the Congregational Church.⁷

Lyman's father, Levi, was born July 3, 1761, in Killingly, Connecticut. On October 24, 1782, he married Sarah Carbin in Oxford, Massachusetts. After the birth of their sixth child, Levi and Sarah moved to Fairfield, Herkimer County, New York. In 1802, they moved to Oppenheim, New York, where Levi had purchased a farm. Later they moved again to Centerville, Alleghany County, New York, where they both died. Levi passed away on January 2, 1830, and his wife died April 15, 1852.

Their family consisted of the following:

William, born in Oxford, Massachusetts, March 2, 1783.
 Daniel, born in Oxford, Massachusetts, January 23, 1785.
 Abbott, born in Oxford, Massachusetts, February 23, 1787.
 Dolly, born in Oxford, Massachusetts, September 1, 1789.
 George, born in Oxford, Massachusetts, September 22, 1791.
 Stephen Dudley, born in Oxford, Massachusetts, October 6, 1793.
 Lyman, born in Fairfield, New York, May 9, 1796.
 Uzziel, born in Fairfield, New York, June 16, 1798.
 Susannah, born in Fairfield, New York, September 7, 1800.
 Sarah, born in Oppenheim, New York, May 4, 1803.
 Clarissa, born in Oppenheim, New York, May 4, 1813.⁸

⁷Ibid.

⁸William Ward Wight, p. 71

CHAPTER III

EARLY LIFE

Levi and Sara Wight had moved to Fairfield, Herkimer County, New York, in the month of March, 1796. Two months later on May 9, 1796, their seventh child was born. When Lyman was six years old, his family moved to Oppenheim, Montgomery County, New York, where they remained until he was eight years old.⁹

Lyman's parents taught him to be "strictly moral and perfectly honest." Lyman says that if there was any immorality about him, it was not the fault of his parents, because they had taught him to rise above all evil.¹⁰

Lyman's schooling was very limited. He was kept at a common county school until he was old enough to help support his family, at which time he discontinued except to go occasionally in the winter when he was not needed at home. When Lyman was sixteen years of age, he persuaded his father to let him go to work by the month. His reasons for doing so are interesting in light of today's problem with drop-outs.

. . . I must say in honor [sic] to my parents that it was not their desire that I should go to school longer. From the time I was old enough I took great interest in

⁹Wilford Woodruff letter.

¹⁰Ibid.

attending meetings and many times felt seriously affected, but about the time I left school I began to feel as many other youngsters do that the pleasures of this life was about all I should ever get and if I missed them I should miss a good chance. I was light minded fond of company and with all quite fond of music and in order to keep up my end worth the family and gratify [sic] my feelings and not fall behind in my youthful career I besought my father to let me go and work by the month. . . .¹¹

Lyman worked locally for the next six months. Then in September, 1813, not being able to enlist in the military because of his age, he took another man's place in the militia for wages. The war with Great Britain was in process at the time so Lyman was assigned to a Captain McIntyre's company and sent to Sacketts Harbor where he spent fourteen days. The young soldier was then selected as one of a guard to escort 1,236 prisoners to Greenbush which was three miles below Albany. The prisoners were delivered in good order after which the guard returned as far as Utica, New York, where they were honorably released. Lyman had served two months for which he was paid sixty dollars. He later recorded: ". . . went home in good health and spirits although but 17 years of age I began to think myself quite a man."¹²

The following September Lyman was hired again to fill another man's position in the militia. This time he was paid thirty-six dollars a month and sent once more to Sacketts Harbor. He was now old enough to enlist but kept this a secret in order to receive the wages. He served

¹¹Ibid.

¹²Ibid.

three months and returned home with one hundred dollars.

Lyman felt that he was man enough to look out for his own needs, so in December, 1814, he shouldered his knapsack and moved one hundred seventy miles west to Henrietta, New York. After being there one year and earning five hundred dollars, he returned to Oppenheim.

When Lyman was twenty years old, his father gave him leave to go and do as he pleased. He took jobs wherever he felt he could do the best, and in the year 1819, traveled as far as upper Canada and back through Michigan taking odd jobs.

On January 5, 1823, in Henrietta, Lyman married Harriet Benton, after which with his new bride, moved sixty miles south to Centerville where his father had previously settled.¹³ While they were living in that community, their first two children were born. Their first child was a son, Orange Lysander, born November 29, 1823, and the second was a daughter, Anna Christinia, born September 30, 1825.¹⁴

The Wight's next move was to Warrensville, Cuyahoga County, Ohio, where they remained until 1829. Their second daughter was born at Warrensville on November 16, 1827.¹⁵

In May 1829, an important event in Lyman's life transpired; he heard Sidney Rigdon preach what was called

¹³William Ward Wight, p. 125. [Harriet was born in 1800, in Vermont to John and Sarah Bradley Benton.]

¹⁴Ibid.

¹⁵Ibid.

Rigdonite doctrine. At the conclusion of a sermon on the principle of baptism for the remission of sins, Lyman went forward and was baptized by Mr. Rigdon. Thus, at the age of thirty-three, Lyman embraced a specific tenet of religion. He was scorned and ridiculed by several hundred persons that were present. Nevertheless, he became a bold and fearless defender of the Rigdonite doctrine.¹⁶ Prior to this time, Lyman's only church attendance had been with the Presbyterians:

My wife had been a presbyterian [sic] and I frequently attended meetings with her and my three first children sprinkled but never believed in any of the religious creeds of the day in consequence of their not carrying [sic] out the whole doctrine of the apostles ever believing that it took as much to save a man in one age of the world as any other.¹⁷

In August, Lyman's wife Harriet followed him into the waters of baptism under the hands of Sidney Rigdon. His life now took on a different perspective. The scriptures became more important, and he began to study carefully the doctrine of the Apostles. The second chapter of the Book of Acts, where it tells of the early saints having all things in common, had special impact on Lyman's thinking. In consideration of this doctrine, he traveled to Kirtland to discuss it with Isaac Morley and Titus Billings. After considerable conversation on the subject, these three men entered into a covenant to hold all things in common as they had anciently. In conformity with this agreement, Lyman

¹⁶Wilford Woodruff letter.

¹⁷Ibid.

moved his family to Kirtland in February, 1830. They moved into the home of Isaac Morley, where they commenced their labors together. It was not long until this little group was joined by eight other families and together they worked unitedly to prepare for the millennium which they felt was close at hand.¹⁸

¹⁸Ibid.

CHAPTER IV

THE LAMANITE MISSION

In the Fall of 1830, Oliver Cowdery, Peter Whitmer, Jun., Parley P. Pratt, and Ziba Peterson departed from Fayette, New York, on a mission to the Lamanites for The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. This was in accordance with a revelation which Joseph Smith declared he received in October of the same year.¹⁹ Their destination was the state of Missouri.

They continued their journey until they came to Kirtland, Ohio. Located in Kirtland was a large number of followers of the Campbellite movement.²⁰ The leader of this group was Sidney Rigdon who lived in Mentor. Parley P. Pratt, who had previously been a member of the Campbellites and was a former acquaintance of Mr. Rigdon, persuaded his companions to stop and present their message to these people. The result was the conversion of over one hundred

¹⁹The Doctrine and Covenants (Salt Lake City: The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, 1956), p. 32, hereafter cited as D&C.

²⁰This movement was initiated by Alexander Campbell, who emphasized a need for purification of the American religions by restoring the Primitive Church. Under the leadership of men like Sidney Rigdon, many converts were organized into independent societies. Milton V. Backman, American Religions and the Rise of Mormonism (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book Company, 1956), p. 245.

people, including Sidney Rigdon.²¹

As previously stated, Lyman Wight had joined Sidney Rigdon's group and moved to Kirtland earlier that year. About this time, five families had concluded to join Lyman and others in their common stock family. Since they each owned a good farm in Mayfield, seven miles up the river from Kirtland, it was decided that Lyman should move his family there to preside over this branch. The day he was preparing to move was the same day that the Lamanite missionaries arrived in Kirtland. He had his wagon about half loaded when these men approached him with the desire to introduce him to the Book of Mormon. "I desired them to hold on till I got away as my business was of vital importance and I did not wish to be troubled with romances nor idle speculators."²²

The missionaries were undaunted, but continued to persuade in a good-natured way until Lyman's curiosity was aroused. He concluded to stop for just a short time to hear what these strangers had to say. A meeting was called and the missionaries presented their message. One testified that he had seen angels and another said that he had seen the plates from which the Book of Mormon had been translated.²³ They told of miracles that had been wrought and how the gifts of the Holy Ghost were once again being

²¹Parley P. Pratt (ed.), The Autobiography of Parley Parker Pratt (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book Company, 1938), p. 48.

²²Wilford Woodruff letter.

²³Ibid.

manifest on the earth. Because of great interest in this message, Lyman remained until almost dark. He then completed his packing and proceeded to his new home.

I mused myself by thinking that the trouble was over and that I should not see them again for a long time, supposing they would start the next morning for the western boundary of Missouri, but in this I was very much disappointed.²⁴

The missionaries remained in Kirtland for the next three weeks and succeeded in baptizing the whole of the common stock family. Lyman and his family were baptized on November 14, 1830, in the Chagrin River at Kirtland. He was then confirmed a member of the Church on November 18, and ordained to the office of elder on November 20. These ordinances were performed by Oliver Cowdery.²⁵

Lyman relates this story in connection with his ordination to the priesthood:

We traveled into the woods about half a mile and placed ourselves behind a large oak tree. After a most solemn prayer he intended to ordain me a priest but ordained me to an elder. He afterwards told me he done [sic] it in conformity to a vocal voice, but in these matters I confess my knowledge was very limited indeed.²⁶

When the Lamanite missionaries were ready to depart from Kirtland, they wrote to Joseph Smith and asked that someone be sent to preside over these new converts. Since Lyman Wight, Sidney Rigdon and Isaac Morley had been ordained to the priesthood, they were left in charge until such time that Joseph could send other leaders.²⁷

²⁴Ibid.

²⁵Ibid.

²⁶Ibid.

²⁷Pratt, p. 48.

After Sidney Rigdon left for New York to meet Joseph Smith, Lyman, being the only elder in the area, was in charge of the branch.²⁸ When the Prophet learned of the many converts in the area of Kirtland, Joseph sent John Whitmer to preside over the saints in Ohio.²⁹ Elder Whitmer arrived about the middle of January, but soon discovered that the task assigned him was too difficult to handle alone, so he wrote Joseph to come immediately to Kirtland. On February 1, 1832, Joseph Smith arrived and took charge, but in the short time Wight had officiated, he traveled a distance of two hundred miles, baptized three hundred seventy-three members, and organized eight branches.³⁰

During the time that Lyman presided in Kirtland, the common stock family continued but when Joseph Smith arrived he asked that it be stopped. In its place he received what his followers accepted as revelation setting forth the true economic order for the Church.

A conference of the Church was held at Kirtland in June, and at this time the first distinctive ordinations to the office of high priest were made. Joseph Smith ordained Lyman Wight, Hyrum Smith, John Murdock, and Reynolds Cahoon to the office of high priest. Following a speech by Lyman, the Prophet called on him to ordain nineteen of the early

²⁸Wilford Woodruff letter.

²⁹Lucy Mack Smith, History of Joseph Smith (Salt Lake City: Bookcraft, 1958), p. 191.

³⁰Wilford Woodruff letter.

leaders of the Church to that high office. Included among those ordained were Joseph Smith, Joseph Smith, Sr., Sidney Rigdon, Samuel Smith, Thomas Marsh, and Parley P. Pratt.³¹

Following the ordinations, Lyman claimed to have seen Jesus Christ sitting on the right hand of God the Father, making intercession for his brethren, the saints.³² He then prophesied of Christ's second coming and said there would be some in the congregation who would live to see his prophecy fulfilled.³³

The day following that conference, Joseph Smith claimed further revelation from the Lord. It set forth what was desired of the elders until they met the next conference to be held in Missouri. The elders were assigned their respective companions to travel two by two to the state of Missouri, preaching and baptizing on the way. Lyman was assigned to travel with John Corrill. The Lord also had a specific warning for Lyman: "And let my servant Lyman Wight beware, for Satan desireth to sift him (Lyman) as chaff."³⁴

On June 14, in company with Hyrum Smith, John Murdock, John Corrill, and Lyman left for Missouri. They traveled to Fairport where they boarded the steamer, "William Penn" for Detroit, Michigan.

³¹Journal History of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, June 3, 1831, located in Church Historian's Office, hereafter referred to as Journal History.

³²Ibid.

³³Ibid.

³⁴D&C, p. 52.

From Detroit to Jackson County, the missionaries traveled by foot, arriving on August 12, 1831. Before arriving, John Murdock became ill and had to be left behind. Upon his arrival in Jackson, Lyman acquired a horse and traveled the fifty miles back to bring Elder Murdock to their destination.³⁵ This thoughtfulness of others and devotion to the work was typical of Lyman's service in the Church.

³⁵The History of the Reorganized Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints (Independence, Missouri: Herald Publishing House, 1896), II, 203, hereafter cited as History of the Reorganized Church.

CHAPTER V

AFFAIRS IN JACKSON COUNTY

On September 1, 1831, Lyman's family arrived in Jackson County having been separated from him for three months. Now in addition to preaching twice a week and traveling to surrounding counties to engage in missionary work, it was necessary to care for the needs of his family. He built a home and provided enough food and clothing to last six months. Then on January 26, 1832, he left for Cincinnati on another extended mission in company with Parley P. Pratt, John Murdock and Levi Hancock. He was away from home until July 14, 1832, then returned to Independence with Elias Higbee, whom he had converted. In the five months that he was gone, Elder Wight succeeded in baptizing one hundred people including the Higbee family.

There was an interesting story told in relation to the conversion of the Higbees that gave insight as to what Lyman was really like. Since the Higbees were fishermen, Lyman fished with them during the day and then preached in the evenings. One evening they went directly from fishing to the court house, where Lyman climbed on top of an old stove barefooted, with his trousers rolled up to his knees and his shirt sleeves rolled to his elbows, and proceeded to preach for two hours. The people that listened to him were

heard to remark, "He preached the truth, though he does not look much like a preacher."³⁶

Following the mission to Ohio, Lyman continued to preach at least five times a week as well as travel in the immediate area of Independence to do missionary work--and as a result of these labors, succeeded in baptizing thirty-three people as members of the Church. He also acted as an agent for the Church and was able to raise \$1,578 by selling the following items: eighty head of cattle for \$500; four horses, \$175; twenty-two thousand pounds of flour at \$2.50 per hundred pounds, \$550; pork \$141; leather goods \$72; corn \$50; potatoes \$75 and bacon \$120. In addition to the above duties, he planted sufficient crops to sustain his family and had enough surplus to sustain one more family.³⁷

Early in the month of July, 1833, a document known as the "secret constitution" began circulating among the old settlers of Jackson County. It consisted of numerous charges against the saints and a covenant to see them removed from the county. On July 20, a group of Missourians consisting of three hundred to five hundred men collected and demanded the discontinuance of the Church printing press, the closing of Sidney Gilbert's store, and the cessation of all

³⁶"History of Lyman Wight," Millennial Star, XXVII (July 22, 1865), 455.

³⁷Wilford Woodruff letter.

mechanical labors.³⁸ After the saints refused to meet these demands, a mob destroyed the printing press and tarred and feathered Bishop Edward Partridge and Brother Charles Allen. These activists would have also probably destroyed Sidney Gilbert's store but Gilbert agreed to close it and started boxing the goods. Three days later on July 23, another group of Missourians again assembled with their weapons of war. In order to stop bloodshed, some of the leading brethren, including Lyman, entered into an agreement with members of the "mob" to move with their families from the county on or before January 1, 1834.³⁹ They also agreed to persuade the remainder of the saints to leave the county and in return this body of men was to use its influence to stop violence. Despite this agreement, the "mob" continued to attack the saints, and in the midst of this persecution Lyman moved his family to the Big Blue River. At that time Church meetings were conducted in the woods for the safety of those who attended.

In September, a meeting was held to appoint leaders over the various branches of the Church in Zion, and Lyman was assigned to preside over branch number seven. It is said that while at this meeting, W. W. Phelps sang a hymn in tongues concerning the "travels, toils, troubles, and

³⁸Times and Seasons [Nauvoo, Illinois], I (December, 1839), 18.

³⁹Journal History, July 23, 1833.

tribulations of the Nephites" after which Lyman interpreted its content for the congregation.⁴⁰

On October 31, 1833, the "mobs" renewed their attacks, in an attempt to drive the saints from the county; and their first initial strike was against the saints on the Big Blue River. Since Lyman had been selected and ordained by Bishop Partridge to protect the saints, this resolute leader, upon learning of the organization of a mob, recruited fifty men and sent them to the Whitmer branch where he thought the "mob" was headed. Immediately after the men left, Lyman and Elias Higbee, being the only two men remaining behind, found the "mob" approaching their own branch. "It is true, we were somewhat at a loss to know what to do," Lyman wrote,

. . . but to let them come would not do and we started out to see if we could make any discoveries of what they were intending to do. After traveling 3/4 of a mile we found they were on the other side of the corn field from us, taking some refreshments. I told Brother Higbee if he would go round on one side, I would the other and in joke we would surround them, and if he heard me fire my gun and holler come on boys, to do the same at his end of the field. On hearing this the mob immediately fled, hollering we are surrounded and never came near our branch afterwards.⁴¹

The attacks continued against the branches of the Church until one member, Andrew Barber, was killed and many

⁴⁰Far West Record, p. 36, located in the Church Historian's Office. [This record was the conference minutes and record book belonging to the High Council of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, Far West, Missouri.]

⁴¹Wilford Woodruff letter.

of the saints badly beaten. Homes were destroyed, and much of the livestock belonging to the saints was turned loose. Richard McCarty, one of the mob, was caught breaking into the store of Gilbert and Whitney and taken before a justice of the peace where he was immediately released. Not being satisfied, McCarty then took out a warrant for the arrest of Sidney Gilbert and others for false imprisonment. These brethren were found guilty and placed in jail.⁴²

On November 5, Independence was crowded with many men, armed with guns and other weapons, who were desirous of killing the Mormon prisoners. The militia was called out and placed under the command of Colonel Thomas Pitcher, but this militia consisted mainly of the mob. On hearing of the troubles in Independence, and fearing for the safety of the prisoners, Lyman raised what force he could, which consisted of about one hundred men, and proceeded to that place. They arrived about sunrise and formed their line of battle west of town. James Bracken, a member of this force, later related what took place as he remembered it:

The mob was there numbered I should judge about 500 men. Lyman Wight started to meet the commander of the mob and he [the commander of the mob] started to meet Lyman Wight, his name was Pitcher, under rank of Colonel. He approached Lyman with his hand upon his sword while Lyman walked up to him in his shirt sleeves and bare headed in an easy careless kind of way, and held out his hand but Pitcher refused to take it and still held his hand upon his sword.

This was the commencement of the treaty which ended in our leaving the county. The agreement was that we

⁴²Journal History, November 1, 1833. [Affidavit on the subject by Lyman Wight.]

should leave the county inside of 10 days. Our crops at the time were standing in the field, which we could not gather. The principal part of the brethren crossed the Missouri river into Clay Co. Our company went west [east] and settled in Lafayette Co.⁴³

Lyman reported that as a result of this meeting with Colonel Pitcher, an agreement was adopted that Latter-day Saints would relinquish their arms if the Colonel would seize the arms of mob. Pitcher cheerfully agreed to these terms, and pledged his honor that they would be met. Wight and his men then returned home feeling assured that they would no longer be molested. However, according to Lyman Wight's testimony, Colonel Pitcher's agreement with him was never kept, and the mobs were never disarmed. In fact, the next day the majority of the militia had joined the mob, including Pitcher. They divided into gangs of sixty to seventy men and went from house to house driving the saints from their homes and threatening the lives of women and children if they did not leave the county immediately.⁴⁴

Lyman and his family were among those driven from their homes. While he was spying on the mob to detect their movements, he was discovered and about sixty men started after him. Although he had only a common team horse which had been borrowed from Samuel Drollinger, he was able to elude them. His pursuers had managed to run him to a deep

⁴³Statement made by James B. Bracken, November 6, 1881, located in Church Historian's Office in file of James B. Bracken's personal papers.

⁴⁴Times and Seasons [Nauvoo, Illinois], IV (July 15, 1843), 263.

washout for the purpose of cornering him, but to their astonishment as well as the astonishment of the brethren, who were watching from the hills, when he reached the gulf his horse cleared it in safety and the mob did not dare follow.⁴⁵

While Lyman was fleeing to the south, the mob returned and drove his family from their home. They went north across the river into Clay County and for the next three weeks, Lyman did not know of their fate. He was unable to learn that they were living on the banks of the Missouri River with very little food or clothing and being sheltered only by a tent made from rag carpet. Lyman was not doing much better, for at one point, he went three days without food. Most of the approximately one thousand Jackson County saints suffered a fate similar to Lyman's. According to Lyman's testimony recorded a few years later in Nauvoo, the mob burned two hundred and three homes and one grist mill. "I saw," he declared,

one hundred and ninety women and children driven thirty miles across the prairie in the month of November, with three decrepit men only in their company. The ground was thinly crusted with sleet, and I could easily follow on their trail by the blood that flowed from their lacerated feet on the stubble of the burnt prairie.⁴⁶

⁴⁵Statement made by James B. Bracken, November 6, 1881, located in Church Historian's Office. [Also related in Wilford Woodruff letter.]

⁴⁶Joseph Smith, History of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, ed. B. H. Roberts (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book Company, 1948), III, 439, hereafter cited as DHC.

After Lyman located his family, he erected a makeshift shelter under a fallen Sycamore log. While living in this deplorable condition on December 27, 1833, Lyman's wife gave birth to their fourth child, whom they named Lehi.

CHAPTER VI

ZION'S CAMP

The exiled saints in Clay County decided that someone should be sent to Kirtland to inform Joseph of their condition and seek his advice as to what should be done. Understandably, the men were hesitant to leave their families in such a poor condition, but Lyman volunteered to make the journey. He was asked if the condition of his family would permit him to depart, and he replied that his wife lay in the woods with a three day old baby and she had provisions for three days so he thought he was as well off as anyone. Lyman had no way of knowing that this trip would last over five months. Parley P. Pratt volunteered to travel with him so they began their preparations to leave. From Parley's autobiography we learn what these preparations consisted of as well as the conditions under which they traveled. Both men were destitute of proper clothing for such a journey, and neither owned a horse, saddle, or bridle. They also lacked the necessary provisions to care for the needs of their families. Although the majority of the saints were living in similar circumstances, they were willing to share what they could until Pratt and Wight were outfitted and ready to go. "Thus faith and the blessings of God had

cleared up our way to accomplish what seemed impossible.⁴⁷

They traveled every day, regardless of the weather, and were able to complete the journey without mishap and lacking nothing in the way of necessities. They had left Clay County on January 12, 1834, and arrived in Kirtland on February 22.⁴⁸ When Joseph was told of the condition of the saints, it is reported that he burst into tears and exclaimed, "Oh my brethren! My brethren would that I had been with you, to have shared your fate. Oh my God, what shall I do in such a trial as this?"⁴⁹

Two days later the high council was called to a meeting to hear the report of Lyman and Parley. Joseph Smith proceeded to give instructions to the brethren which were accepted as revelation, with specific instructions for Lyman:

It is my will that my servant Parley P. Pratt and my servant Lyman Wight should not return to the land of their brethren, until they have obtained companies to go up into the land of Zion, by tens, or by twenties, or by fifties, or by a hundred, until they have obtained to the number of five hundred of the strength of my house.⁵⁰

The revelation also stated that if five hundred men could not be obtained that no less than one hundred would be acceptable. Lyman was to travel with Sidney Rigdon in

⁴⁷Pratt, p. 108.

⁴⁸History of the Reorganized Church, II, 401.

⁴⁹Lucy Mack Smith, p. 225.

⁵⁰D&C 103:3.

search of volunteers. As a result of this meeting, what came to be known as Zion's Camp was organized with Joseph Smith as commander-in-chief.

Before leaving Kirtland, Lyman was given a special blessing by the Prophet Joseph. He was told that he was of the lineage of Joseph, who was sold into Egypt, "without amalgamation of blood."⁵¹

Within the next week all necessary arrangements were made and those called by the Lord to gather volunteers for Zion's Camp had left to fulfill their assignment.

Lyman and Sidney traveled first through Pennsylvania and New York in company with Joseph Smith after which they returned to Kirtland. Then the last of March, Lyman went with Hyrum Smith, Elijah Fordham, and Samuel Bent to Michigan in search of additional volunteers and also to preach the gospel wherever possible.

Prior arrangement had been made to meet Joseph's company on Salt River in Missouri. So on May 5, Lyman and Hyrum, along with the eighteen men they had been able to recruit, left Pontiac, Michigan, for the trip to Missouri, with Lyman acting as steward for the company. According to Elijah Fordham who acted as their historian, they passed through Ann Arbor, Jacksonburg, Spring Arbor, Constantine, Elkhart, crossed the Illinois River one mile below Ottawa, and then proceeded through Pleasant Grove, Pekin, Quincy,

⁵¹Wilford Woodruff letter.

and Palmyra. They reached Salt River in Missouri on June 8, 1834, and found Joseph Smith's company waiting for them.⁵²

With the arrival of Lyman's group, the company now numbered two hundred five men. The camp was reorganized with Joseph Smith as commander-in-chief and Lyman Wight as general or second in command.

Before leaving Salt River, Lyman took the troops on the prairie where the leaders inspected the firearms of the men, and the members of Zion's Camp had target practice and then drilled for half a day before returning to camp.⁵³

The camp departed from Salt River on June 12, and the next few days were spent in travel. On Sunday, June 15, Parley P. Pratt and Orson Hyde returned from a visit to Daniel Dunklin, Governor of Missouri, with the disheartening news that he refused to fulfill his promise to support the efforts of Zion's Camp in reinstating the Missouri saints on their own land.⁵⁴ Up to this time the governor had consistently maintained that the saints had a right to be reinstated and if necessary he would call out the state militia to accomplish this objective.⁵⁵

The camp had constant threats from the inhabitants of that state and had to be on the alert at all times. They

⁵²Journal History, May 5, 1834.

⁵³Ibid., June 11, 1834. ⁵⁴Ibid., June 15, 1844.

⁵⁵DHC, p. 85.

were also running short of supplies and had to live almost entirely on corn meal. Another problem that plagued the camp was insubordination. Lyman was not without reproach in this regard for he too went against the counsel of the commander-in-chief, Joseph Smith. One June 17, the camp had crossed the Wakenda River where it was reported that a group of men was gathering on the Missouri River with intentions of attacking the saints. The prairie that lay ahead was twenty-three miles long with no timber or healthy water so a debate arose as to where they should camp. Some felt that they should stay near the timber but Joseph and his brother, Hyrum, counseled the brethren to gather wood and water and carry it onto the prairie. When Lyman crossed the river, he disapproved of moving out of the timber, so he and Sylvester Smith and those whom they were able to persuade to remain, camped near the river. The next morning they arose and proceeded to the camp of the majority who had moved some eight miles onto the prairie. When they arrived, Joseph called them together and reproved them for tarrying behind and not obeying counsel. Lyman promised that he would stand by Joseph forever and never again forsake him.⁵⁶ Lyman later reported that he remained behind because he was jealous of Hyrum Smith, but he no longer felt any hardness toward him.⁵⁷

Dissension had been a problem from the time the camp began its journey, and Joseph had previously prophesied that

⁵⁶Ibid., pp. 100-101. ⁵⁷Ibid., p. 155.

if they did not repent they would die like sheep with the rot.⁵⁸ The prophecy was not long in being fulfilled for on June 21, cholera struck the camp and before it subsided sixty-eight of the saints had suffered from the disease and fourteen of these died. It is claimed that it was not until the camp made a covenant to obey God's commandments and follow Joseph's counsel, that the plague was stayed.⁵⁹

Although there is evidence that the Lord was displeased with the camp for their disobedience, there is also evidence that he was watching over them and protecting them from their enemies. At least this was the feeling of those present in the camp as well as members of the mobs who were following them. On one occasion the camp had stopped for the night on elevated land between Little Fishing and Big Fishing Rivers. As they were preparing for the night, five men rode into camp swearing and making threats that the brethren would "see hell before morning." They said some three hundred men had gathered and sworn the utter destruction of Zion's Camp. While they were in camp, the wind began to blow and the rising clouds and thunder indicated that a storm was approaching. A tremendous storm of wind, rain, and hail was soon upon them and any design the "mob" may have had was frustrated. Lyman's account of this incident is as follows:

⁵⁸DHC, p. 80.

⁵⁹Ibid., p. 120.

. . . About the setting of the sun the clouds commenced rising with a frightful appearance. Heavier thunder or sharper lightning probably never was heard or seen. The rain commenced falling in torrents, and continued nearly through the night. Those two rivers increased from a low ebb to form sixteen to twenty feet of water, overflowing the bottom for several miles. This proved, however, to be a beneficial circumstance to us, as a mob had collected on both sides of the road, and were rapidly increasing in numbers, with a determination to fall upon us this night. Thirty or forty of this mob crowded themselves into an old cabin, and in endeavoring to hold their horses by their bridles, many of them were severely injured by the falling of the hail. About three miles from where we encamped the hailstones fell from the size of a rifle ball to that of turkey's eggs.⁶⁰

It was reported that one of the Missourians was killed by lightning and another had his hand torn off by his horse drawing it between the logs of a corn crib while he was holding the reins on the other side. According to Joseph Smith, members of the "mob" declared that if that was the way God fought for the Mormons, they might as well go about their business.⁶¹

On June 22, 1834, on the Fishing River, what was purported to be a revelation was received by the Prophet Joseph giving further instructions to the camp. They were told that in consequence of the transgressions of the saints, it was now expedient that the redemption of Zion be postponed for a season. It is probable that such things as Governor Dunklin's decision not to support the saints and the failure of the elders to respond to the call to go to Zion and relieve

⁶⁰History of the Reorganized Church, I, 471.

⁶¹DHC, II, 105.

the saints there, played a part in this decision. Those who could were to remain in that region but those with families in the east would be allowed to return.⁶²

The following day the camp proceeded to Brother Algernon Sidney Gilbert's residence and camped on the bank of Rush Creek. There a council of high priests assembled and a number of the elders were chosen to receive an endowment from on high. Lyman was among those selected and was told to go to Kirtland to receive this endowment and then return to Zion.⁶³

Lyman did not return to Kirtland immediately; in fact, he remained in Zion for the summer. He reports that he built a house for a Colonel Arthur in Clay County which he then rented for himself.⁶⁴ It was at this house that the high priests of Zion assembled on July 3, 1834, and Joseph organized the presidency and high council of Zion. David Whitmer was ordained as president with W. W. Phelps and John Whitmer as his assistants. The high council consisted of Simeon Carter, William E. McLellan, Levi Jackson, Christian Whitmer, Orson Pratt, Thomas B. Marsh, Parley P. Pratt, Calvin Beebe, Solomon Hancock, Newell Knight, Lyman Wight, and John Murdock.⁶⁵

Joseph then authorized General Lyman Wight to discharge the members of Zion's Camp and permit them to

⁶²DHC, pp. 108-111. ⁶³Far West Record, pp. 41-42.

⁶⁴Wilford Woodruff letter. ⁶⁵Far West Record, p. 43.

return home. Wilford Woodruff reported that he spent the summer with Lyman in Missouri where they cut wheat, quarried rock and made brick.⁶⁶

In December, Lyman bought a farm seven miles east of Colonel Arthur's where he moved with his family. His efforts for the next three months were spent in preaching the gospel in the area around his new home; then on March 13, 1835, he left for Cincinnati preaching on the way. His purpose in going was to strengthen the Church in that area. In addition to strengthening the existing membership, he was also successful in baptizing a large number of new members. He arrived back in Clay County on May 18, having been gone two months.⁶⁷

On August 21, the high council of Zion met at the home of Lyman Wight to hear the report of some of the missionaries. While they were there, John Corrill entered a complaint against Lyman for teaching that "all disease in this church is of the devil, and that medicine administered to the sick is of the devil, for the sick in the church ought to live by faith." Lyman acknowledged that he had taught the doctrine and, furthermore, he believed it correct.

The President decided that it was not lawful to teach the Church that all disease is of the devil, but if there is anyone who has this faith, let him have it to himself; and if there are any who believe that roots and herbs administered to the sick, and all wholesome vegetables which God has ordained for the use of man and if any say that such things applied to the sick, in order

⁶⁶Journal History, June 28, 1834.

⁶⁷Wilford Woodruff letter.

that they may receive health, and this medicine is applied by any member of the Church--if there are any among you that teach that these things are of Satan, such teaching is not of God.⁶⁸

The latter part of September, Lyman left for Kirtland to keep his previous appointment and there receive his endowment. He also preached as he traveled and visited the branches of the Church on the way.

While in Richmond, Indiana, Elder Wight announced his intentions to preach which drew many threats from the local citizens. According to Lyman, these people intended to tar and feather him. Despite the threats the appointment was kept. The hall had no lighting so Lyman purchased candles to provide light for the evening. The hall was soon filled with men equipped with tar and feathers with which they intended to carry out their threats. Evidence of Lyman's courageous spirit is here manifest for he arose and spoke for two hours and reproved the men for their "meanness, wickedness, and mobocratic spirit." At the close of the meeting Wight asked for an invitation to stay the night which was readily given. He was treated well and given money to aid him in his journey.⁶⁹

Lyman arrived in Kirtland on November 3, in company with George H. and Lyman Smith, and attended the School of the Prophets until the middle of January.⁷⁰

⁶⁸Far West Record, pp. 63-64.

⁶⁹Journal History, December 31, 1835.

⁷⁰This school was established at Kirtland to prepare the elders to go into the world and preach the gospel.

While attending the School of the Prophets, Lyman received the endowments he had been promised and was also given a patriarchal blessing under the hands of Joseph Smith, Senior. It was on December 29, 1835, that the patriarchal blessing was given in which the following pertinent counsel was received:

The enemy will seek to destroy thee; for he will try to lift thee up in pride, and make thee think much of thyself for thy eloquence; but be careful and not let the pride of the heart destroy thee; for thou art called to preach the gospel of Jesus, even thy Redeemer, to the ends of the earth, and if thou art faithful in keeping the commandments of the Lord, thou shalt have power to prevail with him that he will deliver thee from the grasp of thine enemies, and bring thee off triumphant over all the powers of darkness.⁷¹

Lyman later made the following comments relating to these blessings:

. . . Father Smith in my patriarchal [sic] blessing pronounced me to be of the lineage of Joseph who was sold into Egypt without mixture of blood, Simeon Carter done [sic] the same while washing my feet in the house of the Lord. Joseph blessed me many times while in jail and prophesied [sic] much on my head and gave me much good instruction which is long to be remembered.⁷²

Shortly after the first of the year Joseph Smith sent Lyman on a special mission to raise funds for the Prophet's sustenance. He traveled one hundred twenty miles and returned the last of February with five hundred dollars.

He remained in Kirtland two days and then departed for New York to visit his mother. He was gone only a short

⁷¹This patriarchal blessing is on file at the Church Historian's Office.

⁷²Wilford Woodruff letter.

time, but was able to present his mother with the gospel message before she died. There is no indication as to her reaction to this message.

From March 10, until April 5, 1836, Lyman reports that he was busy in organizing, preparing, and giving the endowment and participating in the ordinance of washing of feet. He then left to return to Missouri where he arrived the first week in May.⁷³

⁷³Wilford Woodruff letter.

CHAPTER VII

THE MOVE TO CALDWELL COUNTY

During the last of June, 1836, a meeting was held in Liberty, Missouri, to discuss the continued immigration of Mormons into Clay County. It was resolved that in light of the many differences in the Mormons and the old settlers, and the fact that the Mormons had originally intended to remain in Clay County but a short time, that it was of the utmost importance that they look for a new home before there was a reoccurrence of the troubles that had taken place in Jackson County.⁷⁴

On July 1, 1836, a large number of elders met in Clay County to decide what actions should be taken on the part of the Church in regard to the resolutions of the Clay County residents. A committee of twelve was appointed, of which Lyman was a member, and they resolved that for the sake of peace and friendship they would leave the county, despite the loss of property and expense of moving. Those in attendance at the meeting unanimously adopted the resolutions of the committee and appointed Lyman Wight, Thomas B. Marsh, and Samuel Bent to carry the minutes of the meeting to the citizens of Clay County. Upon receipt of these minutes, the citizens of that county resolved to aid the Mormons in

⁷⁴DHC, II, 448-452.

finding a new location and to solicit funds to help them move.⁷⁵

Sometime in the month of September, 1836, an area in northern Ray County on Shoal Creek was selected as the new gathering place of the saints and members of the Church began the journey to their new home.⁷⁶

As the number of saints began to increase, a petition was made to the state for an act of incorporation for a new county which would be named Caldwell County. About the middle of December, their petition was granted and the gathering took a new impetus.⁷⁷

As part of the organization of the new county, a new regiment of the state militia was established with Lyman chosen as its leader:

We held an election to make choice of a colonel to take command of the regiment in Caldwell County. I received a unanimous vote for that office, which was two hundred and thirty six votes, whereupon I received a commission from under the hands of Lilburn W. Boggs.⁷⁸

Until the last of September, Lyman assisted in their new home as well as preaching every day; then on September 22, left for Illinois on a mission. During the month Wight was gone, he traveled twelve hundred miles and reported baptizing many new members.⁷⁹

In February, 1837, Lyman moved his family to Caldwell

⁷⁵Ibid., pp. 452--455. ⁷⁶Ibid., p. 466.

⁷⁷Ibid., p. 468.

⁷⁸History of the Reorganized Church, II, 114.

⁷⁹Wilford Woodruff letter.

County and spent the next few months getting them settled and provided for their temporal needs.

Sometime in April, David W. Patten preferred charges against Lyman for teaching erroneous doctrines. The high council was convened at Far West on April 24, 1837, to consider these charges. Seymour Brunson, George P. Dykes, and others testified that:

. . . Lyman Wight said that we (the Church) were under a telestial law, because God does not whip under a celestial law, therefore he took us (the Church) out of doors to whip us, as a parent took his children out of doors to chastise them; and that the book of Doctrine and Covenants was a telestial law; and the Book of Commandments (a part of the revelations printed in Jackson County) was a celestial law.⁸⁰

The stake presidency and high council decided that what Lyman had taught was wrong and that he should be required to acknowledge the same to the council as well as all branches of the Church where it had been taught. Accordingly, Lyman left on a short mission back to Illinois with the intent to acknowledge his mistake. He was gone about one month before returning.

A conference of the Church convened on November 7, 1837, at Far West to transact the business of the Church and sustained Joseph Smith as President of the Church with Sidney Rigdon as one of his counselors. However, when Frederick G. Williams was presented as the other counselor, Lyman objected. After some debate, Hyrum Smith was sustained in President Williams' place. Later in the meeting Lyman was

⁸⁰DHC, III, 481.

nominated as a member of the high council but was objected to by John Anderson. Lyman and Brother Anderson discussed the matter privately after which both were given a chance to speak to the conference, and Elder Wight was unanimously sustained.⁸¹

During the winter months, Lyman served on a committee with David Whitmer, Oliver Cowdery, John Corrill, and David W. Patten, whose assignment was to explore future sites for settlement in northern Missouri.⁸² It was apparently as a member of this committee that Lyman discovered his next homesite. On February 1, 1838, he moved with his family to Daviess County, Missouri, about twenty-five miles north of Far West, where the Wights settled on the banks of the Grand River. He built his home on the side of a hill that Joseph Smith later named Tower Hill because of the remains of what Joseph claimed to be an old Nephite altar that stood there.⁸³ It was called Adam-ondi-Ahman, or sometimes just "Diahman."

In May, Joseph Smith, together with other leading men in the Church, visited Lyman and being very impressed with the area came to the conclusion that it would make an excellent site for a town. Wight records for us what then took place:

⁸¹DHC, III, 522-523.

⁸²Elder's Journal [Far West, Missouri], I (November, 1837), 27.

⁸³DHC, II, 35. (For an excellent description of this site, see Ibid., p. 39.)

. . . We, therefore, commenced surveying and laying off town lots, and locating government lands for many miles north of this place. This beautiful country with its flattering prospects drew in floods and emigrants [sic]. I had not less than thirty comers and goers through the day during the three summer months, and up to the last mentioned date (October 30), there were upwards of two hundred houses built in this town, and also about forty families living in their wagons.⁸⁴

With the rapid increase in membership in Diahman, the need arose for greater organization of the Church in that area. Accordingly, on June 28, 1838, a meeting was held in a grove near Lyman's home for the purpose of organizing a new stake of Zion. ^{John} Joseph Smith, Joseph Smith's uncle, had recently moved to Diahman and was selected as the stake president and Reynolds Cahoon and Lyman Wight were chosen as his counselors.⁸⁵

The increase in the number of Latter-day Saints in Daviess County was soon to create problems for them. It seemed obvious to the old settlers that they would soon lose their influence at the polls, so an effort was made to stop the Mormons from voting at an upcoming election. On the morning of August 6, 1838, William Peniston, who was running for office, and some of his supporters, surrounded the polling booth in Gallatin with the intent of stopping any Mormon from casting his vote.⁸⁶ Lyman reported being

⁸⁴Rollin J. Britton, Early Days on the Grand River and the Mormon War (Columbia: Missouri Historical Society, 1920), pp. 6-7.

⁸⁵DHC, III, pp. 38-39.

⁸⁶Ibid., pp. 56-57.

followed to the polls by three ruffians with stones in their hands. They swore to kill him if he attempted to vote.⁸⁷

It was not long until a fight started and a number of people were hurt. The mobs went for guns and the saints hurried home to hide their families and prepare for an attack. The following day word reached Far West that two or three Mormons had been killed in the fight and their bodies left unburied. It created great excitement and Joseph Smith and some of the brethren left for Daviess County to assist the saints.

That night they arrived at Lyman Wight's, where a number of the brethren had gathered to await counsel. They spent the night discussing the situation and the next morning went to view the conditions in the area. They called on Adam Black, justice of the peace and judge-elect for Daviess County, who had previously been united with the mob effort to prevent the saints from settling in the county. Black confessed that he had violated his oath as magistrate and to satisfy the saints he wrote and signed the following agreement:

I, Adam Black, a Justice of the Peace in Daviess county, do hereby sertify [sic] to the people coled [sic] Mormin [sic], that he is bound to suport [sic] the Constitution of this State and of the United States, and he is not attached to any mob, nor will not attach himself to any such people, and so long as they will not molest me, I will not molest them. This is the 8th day of August 1838.⁸⁸

⁸⁷DHC, p. 441. ⁸⁸Ibid., p. 59.

That evening, some citizens from Millport called on the residents of Diahman to see if the recent difficulties could not be arbitrated by representatives from both sides. It was decided to meet the following day at twelve o'clock, noon. Lyman Wight, John Smith, Vinson Knight and Reynolds Cahoon were among those that spoke for the saints. While Joseph Morin, senator elect; John Williams, representative elect; and James B. Turner, clerk of the circuit court, were appointed to represent the Millport citizens.

At this meeting both parties entered into a covenant of peace, to preserve each other's rights, and stand in each other's defense; that if men did wrong, neither party would uphold them or endeavor to screen them from justice, but deliver up all offenders to be dealt with according to law and justice. The assembly dispersed on these friendly terms.⁸⁹

While these men were deciding on a peaceful means of settling differences, others were stirring up trouble. Judge Black issued a statement that he had been forced by the Mormons to sign his previous affidavit.⁹⁰ And William Peniston, who had been defeated in his attempt for the state senate, issued an affidavit accusing Joseph Smith and Lyman Wight of being leaders of a mob set to do violence on Daviess County residents.⁹¹

⁸⁹DHC, p. 60.

⁹⁰Missouri Republican Daily, XV (September 3, 1838), 2, as quoted in Leland Homer Gentry, "A History of the Latter-day Saints in Northern Missouri from 1836 to 1839" (unpublished Doctoral dissertation, Brigham Young University, 1965), p. 264.

⁹¹DHC, III, 61.

On August 11, a committee from Ray County arrived in Far West to inquire into the charges of Black and Peniston. They met with the saints there and then proceeded to Daviess County. The first place at which they stopped after arriving was Lyman's home where Joseph Smith and other members of the Church had gathered. They presented their purpose for coming and expressed a desire to settle the difficulties that existed between the Mormons and the Missourians. When they urged the saints to comply with civil law, it was reported that Lyman stated that he felt no allegiance to the law, for it had not protected him in his rights in the last seven years. He also supposedly said that he would rather die than submit to the efforts of his enemies.⁹²

Following this meeting Joseph returned to Far West where he learned that a warrant had been issued for the arrest of himself and Lyman Wight.⁹³

When the sheriff tried to serve this writ on Lyman, it is reported that he met with opposition. The Western Star recorded that the sheriff found Lyman's home surrounded by a force of men eighty to one hundred strong. They quoted Wight as saying to the constable that he would not be taken alive because the laws had never protected him, that he owed them no obedience and that the whole state of Missouri could

⁹²William Swartzell, Mormonism Exposed (Pittsburg: A. Ingram, by the author, 1846), p. 32.

⁹³DHC, III, 63.

not take him.⁹⁴ With the report that Wight had resisted arrest, large numbers of Missouri residents began collecting supposedly to aid the sheriff in his efforts to bring him into custody.⁹⁵

With such a large gathering of men, the Mormons were not convinced that their purpose was merely to take Lyman Wight and therefore they made plans to defend themselves. John Corrill gives this account of the Mormon feelings and points out that Lyman claimed the sheriff had never attempted to take him:

This excited and alarmed the Mormons. They began to think there was some other object in view besides taking Wight; for Smith had previously told the sheriff that he never resisted, but was perfectly willing to surrender and said he would persuade Wight to do so. For this purpose, he sent for Wight to come to Far West and see him, which he did, and [Wight] agreed to submit, saying that the sheriff had never attempted to take him. The citizens continued to gather, and news came to Smith that there would be four thousand armed men together in a few days. This alarmed Smith, and he sent a messenger to General Atchison to come to Far West and see him and advise him what to do. He did so, and also went to Daviess, and advised Smith and Wight, and such others as were accused, to surrender, which they did . . .⁹⁶

At the request of Joseph, Lyman went to Far West where he and the Prophet met with General Atchison on September 4. The general counseled them to submit to a trial

⁹⁴Newspaper Clippings about the Mormons in Ohio, Illinois, Missouri, etc., VI, 177-179. Brigham Young University, Provo, Utah.

⁹⁵DHC, III, 69.

⁹⁶John Corrill, A Brief History of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints (Commonly Called Mormons) (St. Louis: for the author, 1839), p. 34.

so they retained the services of Atchison and his law partner, General Alexander Doniphan, to defend them.⁹⁷

The trial was set for Tuesday, September 6, at Brother Littlefield's home near the southern county line of Daviess County. This place was chosen because the Prophet felt they would be safer there.⁹⁸ On the appointed day the plaintiff, William P. Peniston, failed to make an appearance and the trial was postponed until ten o'clock the following day. The trial was moved further south to the home of a mob member, John Raglin. As a precaution against the mobs coming across the county line and disrupting the trial, Lyman had a company of men ready to protect them.⁹⁹

The trial commenced with William P. Peniston acting as prosecutor and Adam Black as his only witness. Black swore to many things which, according to Joseph Smith, never existed. ". . . and in fine, I think he swore by the job, and that he was employed to do so by Peniston."¹⁰⁰

The witnesses for the defense were Dimick B. Huntington, Gideon Carter, Adam Lightner, and George W. Robinson.

The judge bound Lyman and Joseph over to the court on a five hundred dollar bond each, although he later stated in the presence of George W. Robinson, that there was nothing proven worthy of bonds.¹⁰¹ A few days later the Missouri Argus, a St. Louis newspaper, carried a letter which said

⁹⁷DHC, III, 69-70. ⁹⁸Ibid., p. 72.

⁹⁹Ibid., p. 73. ¹⁰⁰Ibid. ¹⁰¹Ibid.

among other things: "The facts elicited at the trial of Smith and Wright [sic] completely stamped the certificate [affidavit] of Black, Cumstock [sic], and others with falsehood."¹⁰² The Prophet Joseph suggests that this action was taken by Judge King in order "to pacify, as much as possible, the feelings of the mobbers."¹⁰³

The mob forces were now more determined than ever to drive the Latter-day Saints from Daviess County. They sent letters throughout the state requesting aid and soon a force of between two and three hundred men had collected six miles outside Diahman. Colonel Wight, being in charge of the Mormon forces, organized his men in Diahman and in addition sent a letter to General Atchison for aid. Upon receipt of the Colonel's letter, Atchison dispatched General Doniphan to Daviess County with about three hundred men under his command.¹⁰⁴

Upon arrival in the county, Doniphan stationed his men between the opposing forces and then went to the camp of the non-Mormons, who were headed by a Dr. Austin of Carroll County. He ordered them to disperse, but they claimed their objective for arming and collecting was merely for self defense and so they refused to leave.

The general then visited the Mormon camp. He reported the following results to General Atchison:

¹⁰²Missouri Argus, IV (September 27, 1838), 1.
Taken from Gentry, p. 274.

¹⁰³DHC, III, 73.

¹⁰⁴Ibid., p. 442.

I then proceeded with your aid, J. M. Hughes, and my aid, Benjamin Holliday, to the Mormon encampment commanded by Colonel Lyman Wight. We held a conference with him, and he professed entire willingness to disband and surrender up to me every one of the Mormons accused of crime, and required in return that the hostile forces, collected by the other citizens of the county, should also disband.¹⁰⁵

Doniphan declared his determination to hold his position between the two camps and to prevent a collision pending the arrival of General Atchison. However, while he was still in the Mormon camp, Major Hughes informed him that his troops were committing mutiny and were determined to come against the saints in Adam-Ondi-Ahman. Lyman reports what then transpired:

Having a colonel's commission under Doniphan, I was commanded to call out my troops forthwith, and to use Doniphan's own language, 'kill every G-- d----- mobocrat you can find in the county, or make them prisoners; and if they come upon you give them hell.' He then returned to his troop and gave them an address, stating the interview he had with me; and he also said to the mob, that if they were so disposed, they could go on with their measures; that he considered that Colonel Wight, with the militia under his command all sufficient to quell every G-- d----- mobocrat in the county; and if they did not feel disposed to do so, to go home or G-- d----- them, he would kill every one of them. The mob then dispersed.¹⁰⁶

When General Atchison arrived, full inquiry was made into the state of affairs with the Mormons delivering up for trial those accused of crime. Those arrested were Lyman Wight, George A. Smith, Alanson Brown, Alanson Ripley, Vinson Knight and S. B. Stoddard.¹⁰⁷

¹⁰⁵DHC, III, 79.

¹⁰⁶Ibid., p. 442.

¹⁰⁷George A. Smith Journal, Brigham Young University, p. 49.

They were arrested by a constable who could not read his writ and taken before three magistrates. George A. Smith's account of the proceedings indicated that Adam Black was the only witness against them and his testimony was obviously false.¹⁰⁸ The prisoners were detained for two days and subjected to numerous insults. Many times their lives were threatened by men wielding knives and guns. After being dismissed, Lyman demanded that writs be issued against thirty of the mob, but his request was refused.

General Atchison reported to the governor the outcome of the inquiry and stated that the Mormons acted on the defensive. Included in this letter we find an observation concerning Lyman Wight:

The Mormons of Daviess county . . . are headed by Lyman Wight, a bold, brave, skillful, and I may add, a desperate man; then appeared to be acting on the defensive, and I just further add, gave up the offenders with a good deal of promptness.¹⁰⁹

Having been prevented from attacking the saints in Daviess County, the mobs next turned their efforts against the members of the Church in De Witt, Carroll County. They were soon successful in driving them out of the county and back to Far West. At one point Lyman led a group of men from Far West to aid the saints in DeWitt, but the effort was in vain.¹¹⁰

With their success in Carroll County, the mobs turned their attention once again to Daviess County. They were also

¹⁰⁸Ibid.

¹⁰⁹DHC, III, 82.

¹¹⁰Corrill, p. 35.

able to gather new men to their ranks and soon a force of eight hundred or more men were headed for Adam-ondi-Ahman.¹¹¹ When Lyman heard this, he sent to General Atchison for military aid. In response to this request, the General ordered Brigadier General Parks to proceed to Diahman. Being fearful that his men would mutiny and join the mobs, Parks left them and went ahead to converse with Colonel Wight alone. While Parks was at the Wight residence, word was received that the mobs were burning homes and driving the saints before them. This was confirmed by the arrival of Mrs. Don Carlos Smith, and her two small children. The mob had burned her home to the ground and forced her to flee in the snow a distance of three miles carrying her two small children most of the way. It was also necessary that she wade the Grand River which was waist deep. This incident made Parks so indignant that he ordered Wight to gather what forces he could and take whatever course he deemed necessary to disperse the mobs.¹¹²

Colonel Wight followed this order and called out approximately one hundred twenty men. He placed sixty of these under the command of David W. Patten and he took command of the remainder. After they were organized, General Parks addressed them as follows:

Gentlemen, I deplore your situation. I regret that transactions of this nature should have transpired in our once happy state. Your condition is

¹¹¹DHC, III, 161.

¹¹²Ibid., p. 443.

is certainly not an enviable one, surrounded by mobs on one side, and popular opinion and prejudice against you on the other. Gladly would I fly to your relief with my troops, but I fear it would be worse for you; most of them have relations living in this country, and will not fight against them. . . . I can only say to you gentlemen, follow the command of Colonel Wight, whom I have commanded to disperse all mobs found in Daviess county, or to make them prisoners and bring them before the civil authorities forthwith. I wish to be distinctly understood that Colonel Wight is vested with power and authority from me to disperse from your midst all who may be found on the side of mobocracy in the county of Daviess. I deeply regret, gentlemen, (knowing as I do the vigilance and perseverance of Colonel Wight in the cause of freedom and the rights of man), that I could not even be a soldier under his command in quelling the hellish outrages I have witnessed . . . I shall now, gentlemen, . . . leave sole charge with Colonel Wight, whom I deem sufficiently qualified to perform according to law in all military operations necessary.¹¹³

Lyman Wight also addressed the troops and a report of its effect on those who heard is given by John D. Lee who was present. It also gives us an idea of Lyman's appearance and manner:

When the forces were assembled Col. White [sic] made a war speech. As he spoke he stood by his fine brown horse. There was a bear skin on his saddle. He had a red handkerchief around his head, regular Indian fashion, with the knot in front; bare headed, in his shirt sleeves, with collar opening showing his naked breast. He held a large cutlass in his right hand. His manner of address struck terror to his enemies, while it charged his brethren with enthusiastic zeal and forced them to believe they were invincible and bullet proof. We were about three hundred and seventy-five strong. I stood near Col. White [sic] while he was speaking, and I judge of its effect upon others by the way it affected me.¹¹⁴

¹¹³Times and Seasons, IV (Nauvoo, Illinois), July 15, 1843, 266.

¹¹⁴John D. Lee, Mormonism Unveiled (St. Louis: M.E. Mason, 1891), p. 68.

David Patten departed then for Gallatin, and Lyman took the men under his command and went to Millport. Upon arriving, however, they found the place evacuated and burned. The non-Mormons had removed their property from their homes and burned their belongings. They then spread the report that "the 'Mormons' were burning and destroying all before them."¹¹⁵

The non-Mormon forces now moved against Caldwell County. After learning of the troubles in that county, Lyman and the Mormon troops under his command proceeded to Far West, arriving on October 29.

There were many important events that led to what now transpired at Far West. Governor Boggs had issued his famous "Exterminating Order" which called for the saints to be exterminated or driven out of the state.¹¹⁶ The result was an effort to fulfill these orders and all non-Mormon forces collected outside Far West under command of General Samuel Lucas.

The saints within the city prepared for war, but also continued to work for a peaceful settlement. On October 31, a committee of Mormons headed by Colonel Hinkle, met with the opposing forces and secretly made the following arrangement:

. . . First, to give up their [the Church's] leaders to be tried and punished; second, to make an appropriation of the property of all who had taken up arms, for the

¹¹⁵DHC, III, 164.

¹¹⁶Ibid., p. 175.

payment of their debts, and indemnify for the damage done by them; third, that the remainder of the Saints should leave the state, and be protected while doing so by the militia; but they were to be permitted to remain under protection until further orders were received from the commander-in-chief; fourth, to give up their arms of every description, which would be receipted for.¹¹⁷

Colonel Hinkle then returned to Far West and informed Joseph Smith that the militia desired to meet with him and other leaders. In compliance with this request, Joseph Smith, Lyman Wight, Sidney Rigdon, Parley P. Pratt, and George W. Robinson went immediately to the camp of the militia, but to their surprise, instead of being treated with respect, they were made prisoners.

When they approached General Lucas, Lyman shook his hand and said, "We understood, General, you wish to confer with us a few moments. Will not tomorrow morning do as well?" It was at this moment that George M. Hinkle said, "Here General are the prisoners I agreed to deliver to you." Then pulling his sword, General Lucas said, "You are my prisoners, and there is no time for talking at the present. You will march into camp."¹¹⁸

The prisoners were now taken into camp amidst the hideous yells of the militia, where they spent the night upon the ground. Before morning it rained, but they were given nothing for cover.

The next day Hyrum Smith and Amasa Lyman were taken from their families and brought into camp as prisoners.

¹¹⁷Ibid., p. 188.

¹¹⁸Ibid., p. 445.

That night, Lyman was visited by General Wilson, sub-alternate of General Lucas, who made the following proposition:

Colonel Wight we have nothing against you, only that you are associated with Joseph Smith. He is our enemy and a damned rascal, and would take any plan he could to kill us. You are a damned fine fellow, and if you will come out and swear against him, we will spare your life, and give you any office you want; and if you don't do it, you will be shot tomorrow at 8 o'clock.¹¹⁹

During Zion's Camp Lyman had promised never to forsake Joseph Smith and he now proved his intent to keep that promise. He replied to Wilson,

General Wilson, you are entirely mistaken in your man, both in regard to myself and Joseph Smith. Joseph Smith is not an enemy; but is as good a friend as you have got. Had it not been for him you would have been in hell long ago, for I should have sent you there by cutting your throat, and you may thank him for your life. And, now, if you will give me the boys I brought from Diahman yesterday, I will whip your whole army.¹²⁰

Wilson told Wight that he was a strange man and if he would not accept his proposal he would be shot, to which Lyman replied, "Shoot and be damned."

About this time General Doniphan came to Lyman and the other prisoners and informed them that the decision had been reached to have them shot the following morning. Lyman quotes Doniphan as saying, "Colonel the decision is a damned hard one, and I have washed my hands against such cool and deliberate murder."¹²¹ Doniphan also told Wight that he

¹¹⁹"History of Lyman Wight," Millennial Star, XXVII (July 22, 1865), 457.

¹²⁰Ibid.

¹²¹DHC, III, 446.

planned to take his troops and leave Far West rather than witness the murder. The general departed with the comment, "Colonel, I wish you well."

We learn more specifically of the orders for the prisoners to be shot and Doniphan's reaction thereto from correspondence between Doniphan and Lucas:

Brigadier-General Doniphan:

Sir: You will take Joseph Smith and the other prisoners into the public square of Far West, and shoot them at nine o'clock to-morrow morning.

SAMUEL D. LUCAS
Major-General Commanding¹²²

Doniphan made a hasty reply in which he said:

It is cold-blooded murder. I will not obey your order. My brigade shall march for Liberty tomorrow morning at eight o'clock; and if you execute these, I will hold you responsible before an earthly tribunal, so help me God!

A. W. DONIPHAN
Brigadier-General¹²³

Doniphan's response appears to have altered Lucas' intentions and with the removal of the next day of Doniphan's troops, the whole camp was thrown into confusion. Lucas now revoked the order to have the prisoners shot and made plans to remove the prisoners to Jackson County.

¹²²Ibid., p. 190.

¹²³Ibid., pp. 190-191.

CHAPTER VIII

LIBERTY JAIL

On November 2, 1838, at about the hour Wight and his fellow prisoners were to have been shot, they were placed in a wagon and taken to the public square at Far West. With the exception of Lyman, all of the prisoners were then allowed to see their families.¹²⁴ Following this heart rending scene, the men were forced to start for Independence, Jackson County, Missouri, under the charge of Generals Lucas and Wilson and three hundred soldiers.

This first day's march took them seventeen miles to the Crooked River where they camped for the night. The next morning, November 3, the march continued to the Missouri River which they crossed at William's Ferry in Jackson County. It was during this day's march that Joseph Smith made the following statement to his fellow prisoners:

Be of good cheer, brethren; the word of the Lord came to me last night that our lives should be given us, and that whatever we may suffer during this captivity, not one of our lives should be taken.¹²⁵

The entire march to Jackson County had been made in

¹²⁴Lyman's family was most likely in Diahman at this time and therefore could not be present to bid farewell to him. For a more detailed account, see DHC, III, 193-194.

¹²⁵pratt, Autobiography, p. 210.

great haste. The apparent necessity of this rapid movement was a contention between Generals Lucas and Clark as to who would have possession of the prisoners. Joseph Smith wrote:

. . . Clark wanted the privilege of putting us to death himself, and Lucas and his troops were desirous of exhibiting us in the streets of Independence.¹²⁶

General Moses Wilson was quoted by Parley P. Pratt as saying:

It was repeatedly insinuated, by the other officers and troops that we should hang you prisoners on the first tree we came to on the way to Independence. But I'll be d-----d if anybody shall hurt you. We just intend to exhibit you in Independence, let the people look at you, and see what a d-----d set of fine fellows you are. And, more particularly, to keep you from that old bigot of a General Clark and his troops, from down country who are so stuffed with lies and prejudice that they would shoot you down in a moment.¹²⁷

While in Jackson County, the prisoners were treated kindly, and given much freedom. Perhaps the only unpleasant aspect of the stay was their exhibition as wild animals for the public's entertainment. Being before the public, however, was used to good advantage as they took the opportunity to preach the gospel.

Since leaving Far West, General Lucas had refused all orders from General Clark to take the prisoners to Richmond, but on November 7, Colonel Price arrived in Independence with orders, not only from General Clark, but also from the governor, to escort the prisoners to Richmond for trial.

¹²⁶DHC, III, 200.

¹²⁷Pratt, Autobiography, p. 209.

It was with some difficulty that Price found men to accompany him in taking the prisoners to Richmond, but on November 8, having found three, they left for that place.

The guards were armed with swords and pistols, evidently for the protection of the prisoners more than to prevent their escape. As they traveled, the guards started drinking and soon were "three sheets in the wind." Wight and his fellow prisoners were allowed to ride as much as sixty or eighty rods in front or behind the guards. At night while the guards slept, they gave their guns to the prisoners as protection against attacks by hostile neighbors.¹²⁸

The journey to Richmond took two days and was completed without incident, but not until Colonel Price went ahead and returned with about seventy-five troops to protect the prisoners from the constant threats of armed men who had followed them.¹²⁹

Upon arrival in Richmond, the prisoners were placed in an old log house and heavily guarded. What little food was provided had to be eaten with their hands. About seven o'clock, General Clark visited them, but refused to answer their questions about why they were being held.¹³⁰

¹²⁸Parley P. Pratt, Late Persecutions of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints (Mexico, N.Y.: J. W. Harrison, by the author, 1840), p. 95.

¹²⁹DHC, III, 206.

¹³⁰Britton, p. 85.

A short time after Clark left, Colonel Price, John Fulkerson and ten armed guards entered the room. While the guards stood with cocked guns, the windows were nailed shut and the prisoners were chained together by Fulkerson. Colonel Price then made a search for weapons and finding pocket knives took them from the captives.¹³¹

The following morning, November 10, General Clark again visited the prisoners and Lyman reported:

. . . and with a look of awe and disdain said: Gentlemen, you are charged with having committed treason, murder, arson, burglary, larceny, and stealing, and various other crimes, too numerous to mention, and in great haste left the room.¹³²

While awaiting trial, the prisoners were under the charge of Colonel Price who allowed all manner of abuse to be heaped upon them. The rooms in which the prisoners were kept were miserable and cold and in consequence of the continued exposure, Sidney Rigdon became seriously ill.

Parley P. Pratt reported that the guards were "composed of the most noisy, foul-mouthed, vulgar, and disgraceful, indecent rabble that ever defiled the earth."¹³³

One evening as the prisoners lay chained together, the guards began to boast of the murder and rape they had committed against the saints. Lyman now witnessed the Prophet in terrible majesty as described by Parley P. Pratt:

¹³¹DHC, III, 206.

¹³²Britton, p. 85.

¹³³Pratt, Persecutions, p. 102.

I had listened till I became so disgusted, shocked, horrified, and so filled with the spirit of indignant justice that I could scarcely refrain from rising upon my feet and rebuked the guards; but had said nothing to Joseph, or anyone else although I lay next to him and knew he was awake. On a sudden he arose to his feet, and spoke in a voice of thunder, or as the roaring lion, uttering, as nealy [sic] as I can recollect the following words: 'Silence ye fiends of the infernal pit! In the name of Jesus Christ I rebuke you, and command you to be still; I will not live another minute and hear such language. Cease such talk or you or I die this instant!'

He ceased to speak. He stood erect in terrible majesty, chained, and without a weapon; calm, unruffled, and dignified as an angel, he looked upon the quailing guards, whose weapons were lowered or dropped to the ground; whose knees smote together, and who, shrinking into a corner, or crouching at his feet, begged his pardon, and remained quiet until a change of guards.¹³⁴

General Clark has been desirous of holding court-martial proceedings against the prisoners and had in fact held such proceedings before the Mormon leaders had arrived at Richmond. The general had once again sentenced them to be shot, but fearing that this might not be in accordance with the law, Clark had written to Fort Leavenworth for instructions. He was informed that to shoot the prisoners would be cold-blooded murder.¹³⁵

On Sunday, November 11, Clark informed the prisoners that he had decided to turn them over to the civil authorities for examination and accordingly, later that day, Judge King, Circuit Judge of the Fifth Judicial Circuit, held a brief preliminary hearing where the prisoners were informed of the charges against them. They immediately retained the

¹³⁴Pratt, Autobiography, pp. 210-211.

¹³⁵Britton, p. 80.

services of Alexander Doniphan and Amos Rees as their counsel.

The so-called trial lasted until November 28, but with few exceptions only non-Mormons or apostate Mormons were allowed to testify. Every time a list of witnesses was submitted by the prisoners, the witnesses were immediately imprisoned or driven from the country. The few who did testify were severely threatened if they said anything favorable. Lyman's report of the situation was as follows:

. . . we were kept in chains, with nothing but ex parte evidence, and that given either by the vilest apostates or by the mob who had committed murder in the state of Missouri. Notwithstanding all this ex parte evidence, Judge King did inform our lawyer, ten days previous to the termination of the trial, whom he should commit and whom he should not; and I heard Judge King say on his bench, in the presence of hundreds of witnesses, that there was no law for the 'Mormons,' and they need not expect any. Said he, 'If the Governor's extermination order had been directed to me, I would have seen it fulfilled to the very letter ere this time.'

After a tedious trial of fifteen days, with no other witnesses but ex parte ones, the witnesses for the prisoners were either kicked out of doors or put on trial themselves.¹³⁶

Although numerous other brethren had been brought to Richmond, of those being tried at this time, all but Lyman Wight, Caleb Baldwin, Hyrum Smith, Alexander McRae, Sidney Rigdon, Joseph Smith, Parley P. Pratt, Morris Phelps, Lyman Gibbs, Darwin Chase, and Norman Shearer, were released or admitted to pay bail. Pratt, Phelps, Gibbs, Chase and Shearer were put in jail at Richmond while the remainder

¹³⁶DHC, III, 448. See also DHC, III, 210-211.

were to be imprisoned at Liberty, Missouri. All were to face trial on the same charges of treason and murder.¹³⁷

The hearing concluded on November 28, 1838, and the next day the prisoners who were scheduled for confinement in Liberty were removed to Clay County where they arrived November 30. According to Hyrum Smith's testimony they were transported in a large wagon after having been chained and handcuffed.¹³⁸

The jail at Liberty was constructed with the outer walls of stone and the inner of oak-hewn logs. There was space between the inner and outer walls that was filled with loose rock, making the walls a total of about four feet thick. The structure was twenty-two feet square and fourteen feet in height. It was divided into two compartments, one above the other. The upper story was just over seven feet in height and provided housing for the jailer and his family, where the dungeon below was under six feet in height. It was approximately fourteen feet square with two small windows located at the north and south ends. The door, which was constructed of heavy wood, was located on the east end of the building and opened to stairs that led to the upstairs apartment.¹³⁹

The winter stay at Liberty was unpleasant for Lyman and his companions. Hyrum Smith's testimony provides insight into what the men endured:

¹³⁷DHC, III, 212. ¹³⁸Ibid., p. 420.

¹³⁹Gentry, p. 567.

Our place of lodging was the square side of a hewed white oak log, and our food was anything but good and decent. Poison was administered to us three or four times. The effect it had upon our system was that it vomited us almost to death; and then we would lie some two or three days in a torpid, stupid state, not even caring or wishing for life . . .

We were also subjected to the necessity of eating human flesh for the space of five days or go without food, except for a little coffee or a little cornbread. The latter I chose in preference to the former. We, none of us partook of the flesh, except Lyman Wight. We also heard the guard which was placed over us making sport of us, saying they fed us on 'Mormon beef.'¹⁴⁰

Lyman's account of the imprisonment substantiates Hyrum's testimony and confirms the fact that he did partake of the supposed human flesh:

The mercies of the jailer were intolerable, feeding us with a scanty allowance of the dregs of coffee and tea from his own table, and fetching the provisions in a basket, without being cleaned, on which the chickens had roosted the night before. Five days he fed the prisoners on human flesh, and from extreme hunger, I was compelled to eat it.¹⁴¹

About the only events that tended to lessen the suffering of the prisoners were the infrequent visits of members of their families and letters they received from friends.

Lyman's wife visited him on two occasions, the first being in December. She brought their four sons with her, the youngest having been born since Lyman entered jail. While they were there, Lyman gave his new son a father's blessing.¹⁴² Lyman's wife visited him again in January and

¹⁴⁰DHC, III, 420.

¹⁴¹Ibid., p. 448.

¹⁴²History of the Reorganized Church, II, 309.

this time brought their two daughters to visit with their father.¹⁴³

Members of the Reorganized Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints claim that it was during a visit from the Prophet's family that Joseph Smith ordained his son, Joseph Smith III, to be his successor. To substantiate their belief, members of this faith rely on the testimony of Lyman Wight that the ordination occurred. In 1848, the following statement appeared in a Strangite publication:

Lyman Wight seems to cherish the idea that is ignorantly held out by some others, that Joseph, the Prophet's son, will yet come up and take his father's original place in the Church as the prophet of the Church . . .¹⁴⁴

Under the date of December 8, 1850, the Journal of History quotes from Lyman's writings, "bore testimony that Joseph Smith appointed those of his own posterity to be his successor."¹⁴⁵

Historians of the Reorganized Church also refer to a letter written to the Northern Islander, under the date of July 18, 1855:

Now Mr. Editor, if you had been present when Joseph came out of Jail (Liberty Jail, Missouri), to lay hands on the head of a youth, and heard him cry aloud, 'You are my successor when I depart,' and heard the blessing poured on his head, I say had you heard all this, and seen the tears streaming from his eyes--you would not

¹⁴³History of the Reorganized Church, II, 315.

¹⁴⁴"Journal of History" of the Reorganized Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints, January 1909, p. 4, on film at Brigham Young University, hereafter cited as "Journal of History."

¹⁴⁵Ibid.

have been led by blind fanaticism, or a zeal without knowledge.¹⁴⁶

It should be noted that Lyman did not say that Joseph ordained his son, but that he blessed him. The testimony of Joseph Smith III, agrees with this interpretation:

It makes me decidedly 'tired,' to have men who think themselves to be possessed of ordinary good sense to ask me 'Did your father ordain you to be his successor.' Where they know he was living and occupying the position himself. How could a successor be ordained to the office until it was vacant?

My father did not ordain himself to the presidency. Did he? He could not ordain a man to supercede himself.¹⁴⁷

It does not seem likely that Lyman would lie about the matter, but he may have misunderstood the blessing that Joseph conferred upon his son. The prayer may have been a promise that young Joseph would one day lead the Church if he were worthy or some other type of blessing.

Some have apparently thought that this blessing was given while the prisoners were in Liberty Jail, but Lyman says it happened following their release. There is also the testimony of Sidney Rigdon's son who claims the blessing was not given at the jail. When young Joseph visited his father, Rigdon was there and claims he never left Joseph's side. He therefore felt the blessing could not have been given without his knowledge.¹⁴⁸

¹⁴⁶Ibid., p. 5.

¹⁴⁷Reorganized Church History, V, 361.

¹⁴⁸E. R. M. Rigdon, handwritten manuscript, Brigham Young University, pp. 55-56.

When at Liberty, the prisoners made two attempts to escape. The first of these was made on February 8, 1839, but was unsuccessful. They had counseled together and decided to make their attempt the evening of February 7, when the jailer brought their supper. Alexander McRae reports that Joseph Smith inquired of the Lord and was told, "that if we were all agreed, we could go clean that evening; and if we would ask, we should have a testimony for ourselves." They all agreed to go but Lyman Wight who said he would not go until the following night. Knowing that they had to be united to succeed, they agreed to wait. When the jailer came with supper, he left the door wide open and went to the back of the jail and commenced reading a book. Since they had agreed on the next night for the escape, no attempt was made at this time. The following evening came, but circumstances were now quite different. Six of the brethren from the Church had come to visit and this made the jailer nervous so he was attended by another guard at suppertime. Although circumstances were not favorable, the prisoners were determined to follow their plan. When the jailer started to leave they tried to follow, but the jailer succeeded in closing the door and locking them in.¹⁴⁹

This attempted escape created immense feelings against the prisoners as well as those who were in the jail at the

¹⁴⁹Alexander McRae, "Incidents in the History of Joseph Smith," Millennial Star, XVII (March 3, 1855), 136-137.

time. Men from the town and county gathered at the prison with proposals to kill the prisoners but could not agree concerning what action should be taken. Because of the indecision, the crowd dispersed and the brethren were not harmed.

Those visiting the jail at that time were considered accessories before the fact and were forced to stand trial. Erastus Snow defended himself and was discharged, but the others were bound over. Snow paid their bail and all were released.

The second attempted escape was in March when the prisoners tried to dig their way out. The digging was more difficult than anticipated and required too much time. Joseph reported that they were discovered one minute before a possible escape. This time the reaction of the populace was quite different, and the people no longer blamed them for the attempt.¹⁵⁰ This change in attitude could perhaps attribute to be the bad publicity that the governor's "Extermination Order" was receiving and the knowledge of Judge King's ex parte hearing that was now quite common.

Through the winter, there were numerous attempts by the prisoners to secure a fair trial of their case, but all failed. Letters were sent by the prisoners and friends to the legislature and Supreme Court but always with no success.

At one point a writ of habeas corpus was applied for before Judge Turnham which was granted with great

¹⁵⁰DHC, III, 292.

reluctance.¹⁵¹ On January 25, the prisoners appeared before the judge; and, with the exception of Sidney Rigdon, all were represented by Alexander Doniphan. Sidney Rigdon plead his case and was admitted bail while the rest were remanded back to their cells.¹⁵²

On March 15, separate petitions were drawn up for each of the prisoners seeking either a writ of habeas corpus or a change of venue. These documents were carried to the capital by Heber C. Kimball and Theodore Turley to bring them to the attention of the State Supreme Court. Kimball and Turley went first to the Secretary of State where they were unsuccessful and then to the Supreme Court judges with similar results. The writ of habeas corpus was denied on the grounds that the "order of commitment" to prison was illegally filled out and the change of venue was denied because it was not made correctly.¹⁵³

Early in April, 1839, the legislature approved a change of venue to Boone County, but before the word reached Liberty, Judge King ordered the prisoners to Daviess County to stand trial. Shortly after arriving in Gallatin, Daviess County, they received word concerning the change of venue but the Grand Jury refused to honor this request. Instead, another trial occurred. It commenced April 9, and lasted one week. At the conclusion the Grand Jury brought in a

¹⁵¹Ibid., p. 264.

¹⁵²Ibid.

¹⁵³Ibid., pp. 288-289.

bill for "murder, treason, arson, larceny, theft, and stealing."¹⁵⁴

On April 15, the prisoners finally started for Boone County. The following document was sent with them but originally did not contain date, name or place:

On the eighth day of April, eighteen hundred and thirty-nine, at the house of Elisha B. Creekmore, in said court, is being the temporary place of holding the court for said County; Present, The Honorable Thomas C. Burch, Judge, the following proceedings were had, to wit--

The State of Missouri

vs.

Joseph Smith, Jr.
Lyman Wight and others

Indictment

for
Larceny

The Judge of this Court having been Counsel in this cause; and the Parties therein not consented to a trial thereof in this Court, But the said defendants, Joseph Smith, Jr. and Lyman Wight objecting thereto, for the reason that the Judge of this Court has been of Counsel in this Cause,

It is ordered by the Court here that said Cause as to the said Joseph Smith, Jr. and Lyman Wight be removed to the Circuit Court of the County of Boone in the Second Judicial Circuit in this State; It is further ordered by the Court that the Sheriff of the county of Daviess, do and he is hereby commanded to Remove the Bodies of the Said Joseph Smith, Jr. and Lyman Wight to the Jail of the County of Boone, and there deliver them to the Keeper of the Said Jail, Together with the Warrant or Process by which they are imprisoned and held.¹⁵⁵

It was while en route to Boone County that the prisoners were able to escape. Lyman left the following account of how this escape was accomplished:

¹⁵⁴Ibid., p. 315.

¹⁵⁵Journal of History, III, 485-486.

. . . The Sheriff selected four men to guard five of us. We then took a circuitous route, crossing prairies sixteen miles without horses; and after traveling three days, the Sheriff and I were together by ourselves five miles from any of the rest of the company for sixteen miles at a stretch. The Sheriff here observed to me that he wished to God he was at home, and your friends and you also. The Sheriff then showed me the mittimus, and he found it had neither day nor date to it, and said the inhabitants of Daviess county would be surprised that the prisoners had not left them sooner; and, said he, 'By G--, I shall not go much further.'

We were then near Yellow Creek, and there were no houses nearer than sixteen miles one way, and eleven another way, except right on the creek. Here a part of the guard took a spree, while the balance helped us to mount our horses, which we purchased of them, and for which they were paid. Here we took change of venue, and went to Quincy without difficulty, where we found our families, who had been driven out of the State under the exterminating order of Governor Boggs.¹⁵⁶

¹⁵⁶DHC, III, 449.

CHAPTER IX

THE NAUVOO PERIOD AND CALL TO THE APOSTLESHIP

The trip to Quincy, Adams County, Illinois, took about ten days and upon arrival Lyman found his family poor but in good health. After locating a house to rent, he moved in with his family and commenced working to take care of their needs.¹⁵⁷

On May 5, 1839, a conference was held at Quincy and Lyman received a special assignment. He was appointed to gather affidavits concerning the loss of life and damage sustained by the saints in Missouri. These affidavits were to be sent to Washington to make the claims of the saints known to the leaders of the nation.¹⁵⁸

Lyman had been very close to the problems in Missouri by virtue of his leadership capacity over a large part of the saints' military forces. He apparently formed some strong opinions as to who caused the persecution of the Church. On May 11, 1839, an article written by Lyman appeared in the Quincy Whig in which his feelings were presented on the subject. Wight quoted from a letter he had written to

¹⁵⁷Wilford Woodruff letter.

¹⁵⁸Journal History, May 5, 1839.

Thomas Benton which outlined many of the trials endured by the saints and then included this paragraph:

Sir, I would gladly forbear, but my duty prompts me to say that it came by the wicked misrule of Democracy. That Democracy which you and I have so dearly loved: yes, it commenced in 1832, and has been fanned by enthusiastic demagogues; until they have succeeded in driving at least five or six thousand inhabitants, including eight hundred democrat voters, from the state.¹⁵⁹

From statements such as these, it became apparent that Lyman put a great deal of blame on the Democratic party of Missouri. Since the Democrats at Quincy had done much to help the destitute saints, these accusations offended some of the inhabitants of Illinois.

The article by Lyman appeared in the paper of Saturday and by Monday the First Presidency received a letter from R. B. Thompson complaining of Lyman's conduct.¹⁶⁰ Thompson had been visited by a Mr. Morris who asked him "what was intended by some publications," and why we attacked "the Democracy of the nation, when they were doing all in their power" to assist the Mormons. In light of the feelings created among the Democrats at Quincy, Thompson suggested a course of action for the Church to follow:

I think we ought to correct the public mind on this subject, and, as a Church, disavow all connection with politics. By such a procedure we may in some measure counteract the baneful influence which his letters have occasioned.

¹⁵⁹Quincy Whig (Quincy, Illinois), May 11, 1839.

¹⁶⁰Journal History, May 13, 1839.

The First Presidency wasted no time in acting in accord to Brother Thompson's suggestion. A letter was written on Friday which appeared in the Whig the following day:

Gentlemen: Some letters in your paper have appeared over the signature of Lyman Wight in relation to your affairs with Missouri. We consider it is Mr. Wight's privilege to express his opinion in relation to political or religious matters, and we profess no authority in the case whatever, but we have thought, and do still think, that it is not doing our cause justice to make a political question of it in any matter whatever.

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. They were committed by a mob composed of all parties, regardless of all differences of opinion either political or religious.

The determined stand in this state, and by the people of Quincy in particular, made against the lawless outrages of the Missouri mobbers by all parties in politics and religion, have entitled them equally to our thanks and our profoundest regards, and such, gentlemen, we hope they will always receive from us. Favors of this kind ought to be engraven on the rock, to last forever.

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

We ask the aid of all parties, both in politics and religion, to have justice done us and obtain redress. We think gentlemen, in so saying, we have the feelings of [i.e. represent] our people generally, however, individuals may differ; and we wish you to consider the letters of Lyman Wight as the feelings and views of an individual, but not of the society as such. We are satisfied that our people as a body disclaim all such sentiments and feel themselves equally bound to both parties in this state, as far as kindness is concerned, and good will; and also believe that all political parties in Missouri are equally guilty.¹⁶¹

Although the First Presidency did not condemn Lyman, they made a definite distinction between the views of an individual member and those of the Church. This position

¹⁶¹Ibid., May 18, 1839.

was further clarified in a letter from the First Presidency to R. B. Thompson. The leaders again expressed disapproval of making a political question out of the Missouri sufferings and then expressed the following opinion:

. . . Having, however, great confidence in Colonel Wight's good intentions, and considering it to be the indefensible right of every free man to hold his own opinion in politics as well as religion, we will only say that we consider it to be unwise, as it is unfair, to charge any one party in politics or any sect of religionists with having been our oppressors . . .¹⁶²

Joseph Smith wrote a personal letter to Lyman declaring his disagreement with the attempt to make the Missouri persecutions political, but expressed confidence in his good intentions and personal high regard for Lyman:

. . . we do not all approve of the course which you have thought proper to take, in making the subject of our sufferings a political question. At the same time you will perceive that we there express that we really feel; that is, a confidence in your good intentions. And (as I took occasion to state to the Council) knowing your integrity of principle, and steadfastness in the cause of Christ, I feel not to exercise even the privilege of counsel on the subject, save only to request that you will endeavor to bear in mind the importance of the subject, and how easy it might be to get into a misunderstanding with the brethren concerning it . . .¹⁶³

In reference to the letter of the First Presidency that appeared in the Quincy Whig, Lyman wrote a reply and stated that he did not wish to make a political issue of the Missouri troubles. However, he said that he could not help noticing the number of leaders among the mobs that affiliated with the Democratic Party, listing as examples of his

— p. 76
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¹⁶²Ibid., May 27, 1839.

¹⁶³Ibid., May 27, 1839.

observation Moses Wilson, Lilburn Boggs, Colonel Pitcher, John Clark, Judge Tomkins, Judge King, Colonel Bogart, and Judge Birch.¹⁶⁴

In addition to these articles, Lyman also ran a series of articles telling of the history of the saints in Missouri. This series was published in the Quincy Whig; was started on May 18, 1839, and continued through June 8, 1839.

Sometime in June, Lyman left on a mission to the east where he remained until September 8, 1839. After his return he reported baptizing many as well as meeting with hundreds of scattered saints.¹⁶⁵

On October 5, when general conference convened in Nauvoo, Lyman was there. He took an active part by speaking on three occasions as well as offering a resolution, "that a new edition of Hymn Books be printed immediately, and that the one published by D. W. Rogers be utterly discarded by the Church."¹⁶⁶ The resolution was passed by the conference.

While at Nauvoo, Lyman visited the saints that settled across the Mississippi River in Iowa. He was at the home of Asahel Smith, in Nashville, on October 19, 1839, when a new stake was organized for the saints in Iowa. John

¹⁶⁴Quincy Whig (Quincy, Illinois), June 1, 1837.

¹⁶⁵Wilford Woodruff letter.

¹⁶⁶Journal History, October 5, 1839.

Smith was called as stake president and selected Lyman to be one of his counselors along with Reynolds Cahoon.¹⁶⁷

Lyman returned to Quincy and on November 15, moved with his family to Augusta, Iowa.

The next year was spent mainly in caring for the temporal needs of Lyman's family. He did not, however, forsake church responsibilities, for his name is prominently mentioned in the conferences of the Church during that time. Lyman reported he was able to convert sixty or seventy members in the Augusta branch with similar success in the surrounding area.¹⁶⁸

January 7, 1841, Lyman went to Nauvoo to visit the First Presidency and obtain permission to go to New York and preach.¹⁶⁹ While there, he was appointed one of a committee to help build the Nauvoo House. We find the following in the Doctrine and Covenants:

And again, I say unto you, that it is my will that my servant Lyman Wight should continue in preaching for Zion, in the spirit of meekness, confessing me before the world, and I will bear him up as on eagle's wings, and he shall beget glory and honor to himself, and unto my name.

That when he shall finish his work, that I may receive him unto myself, even as I did my servant David Patten, who is with me at this time, and also my servant Edward Partridge, and also my aged servant Joseph Smith, Sen., who sitteth with Abraham at his right hand, and blessed and holy is he, for he is mine.

.....
 Let my servant George, and my servant Lyman, and my servant John Snider, and others, build a house unto my

¹⁶⁷Ibid., October 19, 1839.

¹⁶⁸Wilford Woodruff letter. ¹⁶⁹Ibid.

name, such a one as my servant Joseph shall show unto them; upon the place which he shall show unto them also.

And it shall be for a house for boarding, a house that strangers may come from afar to lodge therein; therefore let it be a good house, worthy of all acceptance, that the weary traveler may find health and safety while he shall contemplate the word of the Lord; and the cornerstone I have appointed for Zion.¹⁷⁰

Lyman was advised to return to Iowa and continue preaching until April conference when he could be sustained in the new assignment.¹⁷¹

Lyman returned to Nauvoo for April conference and received his official assignment to travel and collect funds for the Nauvoo House and the new temple, but found he would be sent forth with new authority. President Smith observed that someone should be appointed to fill David W. Patten's position in the Quorum of Twelve. President Rigdon nominated Elder Lyman Wight and he was unanimously accepted.¹⁷²

Lyman spent the next month and a half gathering supplies locally to sustain the workers of the Nauvoo House and temple and on May 27, 1841, traveled to Jackson County, Missouri, visiting the branches of the Church on the way. On returning to Nauvoo in July, he had been successful in collecting two hundred dollars and seventy head of cattle. While home, Apostle Wight took time to move his family in

¹⁷⁰D&C 124:18, 22-23. This revelation also contained instructions to build a temple in Nauvoo.

¹⁷¹Wilford Woodruff letter.

¹⁷²Times and Seasons [Nauvoo, Illinois], IV (April 15, 1841), 387.

Nauvoo and get them situated before leaving on another mission.¹⁷³

Lyman was away three months on this occasion and traveled through Illinois, Kentucky, Tennessee, Mississippi, and Louisiana collecting funds for the temple.¹⁷⁴ On March 15, 1842, Lyman and one hundred seventy English saints left New Orleans for Nauvoo on the steamer "Ariel." They were greeted by the Prophet upon their arrival March 27,¹⁷⁵ and Lyman gave to him, for the temple and Nauvoo House, about \$3,000 worth of goods which he had secured, consisting largely of sugar and molasses.¹⁷⁶

Wight's time was now spent with the business of the Nauvoo House, but we also find he was elected a member of the city council of Nauvoo.¹⁷⁷ Lyman was an active member of the Nauvoo Legion and was narrowly defeated by Wilson Law as its Major General.¹⁷⁸

¹⁷³Lyman reported in his letter to Wilford Woodruff that he left on this mission on September 30, but we find from the minutes of the October conference that Lyman was there and taking an active part. There is also some question about a statement in the minutes that Lyman resigned his mission to collect funds for the temple and Nauvoo House since he immediately left on this mission when conference ended.

¹⁷⁴Wilford Woodruff letter.

¹⁷⁵Ibid. See also DHC, IV, 569. ¹⁷⁶Ibid.

¹⁷⁷DHC, IV, 160.

¹⁷⁸Journal History, August 3, 1842. The Nauvoo Legion was organized under authority of the Nauvoo city charter and consisted of four to five thousand armed men at its peak.

In May 1842, John C. Bennett, one-time mayor of Nauvoo and a very influential leader in obtaining the Nauvoo city charter, was excommunicated from the Church for immorality. He left Nauvoo and started a campaign against Joseph Smith by printing and otherwise spreading many false accusations against the Prophet. On September 1, Lyman and others were sent on a mission to try to help counteract the effect Bennett was having.¹⁷⁹

Lyman left Nauvoo on September 3, 1842, and took his wife and two children with him. They planned on visiting friends and relatives in New York in addition to preaching.¹⁸⁰

The Wights arrived in Dayton, Ohio, and called a conference at that place on October 8. Lyman presided and instructed the saints on the importance of the call of Joseph Smith. Elder Wight told them of the false reports being circulated by John C. Bennett, and counseled them to follow Joseph Smith. He urged that they gather to Nauvoo and build Zion at that place.¹⁸¹

Following the conference, Lyman wrote the First Presidency and reported great success and little persecution. He planned on leaving Dayton and traveling next to Sunbury, Ohio, and from there to Columbus, then Kirtland, and Center-ville, New York.¹⁸²

¹⁷⁹DHC, IV, 160. ¹⁸⁰Wilford Woodruff letter.

¹⁸¹Journal History, October 8, 1842.

¹⁸²Ibid., October 9, 1842.

By October 17, conference was convened at Sunbury under the leadership of Lyman. Once again he counseled the saints to gather to Nauvoo and help build the temple and the Nauvoo House. The minutes of the meeting report this strong testimony given by Lyman concerning the calling of Joseph Smith:

Brother Wight declared himself able and willing to prove the character of Joseph Smith to be more meek, more humble, chase [sic] and virtuous--better qualified to fill his mission, which is to usher in the fullness of all dispensations, and gather the house of Israel, than any prophet from Moses to Malachi. He also challenged the world to bring on their champion and he was ready to meet him.¹⁸³

Lyman went to Kirtland where he had tremendous success. From October 25 to November 7, numerous meetings were held there in which he spoke to crowds numbering as high as seven hundred people. His discourses ranged from the first principles and charity to work for the dead. In the one week he was there, well over two hundred people were baptized, one hundred committed to gather to Nauvoo, a \$2500 grist mill was consecrated to the Church, and Lyman created many good feelings toward the Church in the Kirtland area.

Lyman wrote that he would not return without thousands and tens of thousands, with grist mills, saw mills, carding machines, factories, merchandise, cattle, sheep, and horses, and in short the fulness of the gentiles. "There never has been the time," he said, "when the gospel could be

¹⁸³Ibid., October 17, 1842.

preached with the same ease and influence as at the present time."¹⁸⁴ Joseph Brooks wrote Joseph Smith on the day Lyman left Kirtland and reported that even the most hostile were now friendly with Lyman Wight.¹⁸⁵

Lyman continued his journey to New York where he spent time with his family. It was perhaps at this time that he was successful in converting a number of his family, for we find later that one sister went with him to Texas and three nephews and their families went to Utah with the saints.¹⁸⁶

On the return trip to Nauvoo, Lyman stopped again in Kirtland where he held another conference on April 7, 1843. Joseph Smith reported that this time he was successful in baptizing one hundred apostates and some new members.¹⁸⁷

For some reason Lyman must have back-tracked at this point, for on April 25, John E. Page wrote Joseph Smith and reported Lyman was at Pittsburgh. Page further stated that Lyman had become intoxicated in the presence of "the world and saints."¹⁸⁸ This is the first of a number of reports that Lyman had a problem with drinking.

Lyman and his family returned to Nauvoo on June 16,

¹⁸⁴Ibid., October 26, 1842.

¹⁸⁵Ibid., November 7, 1842.

¹⁸⁶See Third Generation Genealogy Records, Brigham Young University.

¹⁸⁷DHC, V, 352. ¹⁸⁸Journal History, April 25, 1843.

1843, and started preparations to leave for Wisconsin, where lumber was being obtained for the temple.

During the next month, while preparing to leave Nauvoo, Lyman was called to testify in behalf of Joseph Smith who was on trial in connection with the Missouri difficulties. Lyman gave one of the significant testimonies at this trial which contained many important details of the history of the Church in Missouri.¹⁸⁹

¹⁸⁹DHC, III, 437-449.

CHAPTER X

THE MOVE TO THE PINE COUNTRY AND EVENTS ASSOCIATED WITH THE DEATH OF JOSEPH SMITH

One of the early undertakings of the Nauvoo House Committee was to purchase a pinery on the Black River above LaCrosse, Wisconsin, at a cost of twelve thousand dollars.¹⁹⁰ George Miller had taken a company of saints there to acquire lumber.

As was mentioned in the previous chapter, Lyman had started preparations in April, 1843, to go there himself. The following was recorded in his journal under the date July 30, 1843:

I was busily engaged in my domestic concerns, and also in making preparations to move my family to the lumber country in Wisconsin Territory on Black River, distance from this place, about five hundred miles . . . I accordingly started on the 22nd of July, with my family and about one hundred and fifty persons besides, consisting of men, women, and children, with no purpose in view only to procure lumber to build the temple, the Nauvoo House, and to assist in the building up of the city of Nauvoo. The building committees of these two houses are now the proprietors of mills, and a lumbering establishment in that place. We passed up the Mississippi River, on the steamer 'Maid of Iowa,' and ran as far up as the head of Black River Lake, where we landed on the 26th inst., at eleven o'clock a.m. fifty miles below the

¹⁹⁰Lyman Wight, An Address (Zodiac, Texas: by Lyman Wight, 1848), p. 4. Located in the Church Historian's Office.

mills. From this to the 30th of July I was scouting about, and viewing the fair quality, and situation of the county and patiently awaiting for the arrival of the boats from the Falls on Black River, to convey us up the river to the mills. And on this, which is the 30th of July, the boats arrived. We loaded them and started for the mills, where we landed on the 4th of August, 1843.¹⁹¹

It was necessary that the company leave the steamer at LaCrosse and ascend the Black River to the Falls by flat-boats. These boats were ten feet wide and thirty feet long and were propelled by push poles, paddles and by pulling on overhanging brush.¹⁹²

While proceeding up the river, Lyman's youngest son, Loami, who was four years old, fell off the boat and was trapped for a time underneath it. The boy's brother, Levi, jumped in the river and took him to shore, thinking he had drowned. Levi went for Lyman and when they returned found Loami struggling to breathe. With help from his father, he soon recovered.¹⁹³

The winter in the pinery was apparently difficult. One of the major problems was the lack of sufficient food. Men, women and children were on half rations for days. There were times when only a little bread was available and nothing to go with it.¹⁹⁴

The supplies they did secure were brought in from LaCrosse by sleigh after the river had frozen. Lyman also

¹⁹¹Journal of History, III, 169-170.

¹⁹²Ibid., IX, 260. ¹⁹³Ibid.

¹⁹⁴Ibid., p. 262.

expressed concern over a problem with those of the company that were lazy and did not do their share of the work.

In addition to cutting lumber, Lyman continued his missionary labors, this time among the Indians. They were found to be receptive and willing to accept counsel in both temporal and spiritual affairs.¹⁹⁵

During the winter Lyman conceived the idea of going to Texas. In a letter to the First Presidency February 15, 1844, Lyman described this plan:

Now, under all these circumstances, a few of us have arrived at this conclusion in our minds (such as can undergo all things),--that as the Gospel has not been fully opened in all the South and Southwestern States, as also Texas, Mexico, Brazil, & c., together with the West Indian Islands, having produced lumber enough to build the Temple and Nauvoo House, also having an influence over the Indians, so as to induce them to sell their lands to the United States, and go to a climate southwest, (all according to the policy of the U.S. Government),--and having also become convinced that the Church at Nauvoo or in the Eastern States will not build the Nauvoo House according to the commandment, neither the Temple in a reasonable time, and that we have, so far as we have made trials, got means in the south,--we have in our minds to go to the table-lands of Texas, to a point we may find to be the most eligible, there locate, and let it be a place of gathering for all the South (they being incumbered with that unfortunate race of beings, the negroes); and for us to employ our time and talents in gathering together means to build according to the commandments of our God, and spread the Gospel to the nations according to the will of our Heavenly Father.¹⁹⁶

In the spring, having been successful in obtaining enough lumber for the trip to Nauvoo, they constructed rafts on which the lumber could be hauled and started down the

¹⁹⁵DHC, VI, 255.

¹⁹⁶Ibid., p. 255.

river. On one of the rafts a cabin was built providing shelter for Lyman's family. Rocks were placed in front of it in which fires could be built for the preparing of food. Their meals during the trip consisted of fish and ducks which were caught as they floated along the river. Items also were obtained by trading with the Indians camped along the banks of the river.¹⁹⁷

After arriving in Nauvoo on May 1, 1844, Lyman reported spending the ensuing three weeks in close contact with Joseph Smith, being frequently instructed by the Prophet.¹⁹⁸

While Lyman had been in Wisconsin, Joseph Smith had written letters to the five candidates for the presidency of the United States. In these letters he had desired to know what action these men would take, relative to the claims of the saints in Missouri, if they were elected. The Prophet only received three replies and they were unsatisfactory. For a number of reasons, Joseph Smith allowed his name to be placed in nomination for the office of president, and published his "Views on the Powers and Policy of the Government of United States."¹⁹⁹

May 17, 1844, a state convention was held at Nauvoo,

¹⁹⁷Journal of History, IX, 261.

¹⁹⁸Wilford Woodruff letter.

¹⁹⁹B. H. Roberts, A Comprehensive History of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints (Salt Lake City, Utah: Deseret News Press, 1930), II, 202-209.

where Joseph Smith and Sidney Rigdon were formally nominated as president and vice president of the "Reformed Party."

Lyman attended this convention and took an active part as the delegate from Crawford County, Illinois. It was decided that a national convention would be held in Baltimore on July 13, 1844, and Lyman Wight, Orson Hyde, Heber C. Kimball, David S. Hollister, and Orson Pratt were selected to represent the state convention at that place.²⁰⁰

On May 21, 1844, Lyman Wight, Heber C. Kimball, Brigham Young and about one hundred elders left Nauvoo on the steamer "Osprey." Their mission was to advocate Joseph Smith for president; attempt to overcome the effects of the apostate John C. Bennett, who was working to defame the Prophet's character; gather delegates for the Baltimore convention; and preach the gospel of Jesus Christ. As they pulled away from shore, Lyman said, the missionaries gave three cheers for the next president of the United States, Joseph Smith.²⁰¹

Lyman wasted no time in fulfilling his calling, for he gave an address wherein he set forth Joseph's claim to the presidency. There was frequent interruption by those on board, clapping in approval of what Lyman was saying. When

²⁰⁰DHC, IV, 392.

²⁰¹Wight to Joseph Smith, June 19, 1844, located in Church Historian's Office. Concerning this letter B. H. Roberts has said, "This letter represents Elder Wight at his best, and shows him to be an Apostle of the Lord Jesus of no inferior order." DHC, VII, 139.

the speech was finished, and a vote was taken among the 165 passengers as to whom they preferred as president, Joseph Smith received a large majority of the votes.

Elder Wight and his companions reached St. Louis the following day where they called the membership of the Church (consisting of approximately seven hundred members) together to instruct them spiritually and politically.

After remaining in St. Louis one day, they boarded the steamer, "Louis Phillippe," for Cincinnati. The two hundred passengers were prejudiced against the elders until Brigham Young and William Smith gave two powerful addresses. After the talks, Lyman reported that the elders were considered to be superiors to the rest of the passengers.

On May 26, 1844, they arrived in Cincinnati; and after changing their trunks to the steamer "Neptune," Lyman began talking politics to members and non-members. Later he wrote to Joseph and related a conversation with a Mr. David Guard of Lawrenceburg, Indiana, who was supposedly worth about three thousand dollars and one of the first settlers in Cincinnati:

. . . he gave me his views on politics, which completely corresponded with yours. I then gave him two copies of yours. He was so highly pleased with them he pledged his word he would have them published in both the Lawrence Berg [sic] papers as they were both published under his roof, and if they did not comply with so reasonable a request, they the Editors would have to seek shelter elsewhere he also stated that Joseph Smith was the first man since the days of Washington and Jefferson who had been frank and honest enough to give his views to the people before elected and said he would

go his whole length for such a man and that if you were not elected this time you would be the next.²⁰²

Lyman told Joseph this was but a sample of the favorable reaction he had received concerning Joseph's candidacy.

From Cincinnati, the elders traveled to Pittsburgh, and then by steamer, stage and rail, to Washington where they arrived June 2, 1844. Lyman's reaction to the city was that of disgust. He said it "resembles for all the world more the Methodist Slough [sic] of despond that anything like a decent city." The great metropolis "was filled up with demagages, [sic] Jackleg Lawyers and blackleg gamblers and everything else but intelligence."²⁰³

The next week was spent in making every attempt possible to present the cause of the saints in Missouri before the Congress. It was suggested by some, such as General David Atchison, Judge Semple, and Major Hughes, that the state of Missouri should be sued, for they felt there was enough virtue in the state to answer the demand.

Wilmington, Delaware, was the next stop for the missionaries. A date was set for a conference, and then they proceeded to Philadelphia where Lyman reported the following situation:

The church here numbers nearly 200, out of which number many have commenced sickening, and were growing faint at the many false reports in circulation, fearing that the Prophet had fallen and the Twelve were in transgression, but they have since learned that the Prophet is right, and that the Twelve are with him, and they are

²⁰²Ibid.

²⁰³Ibid.

beginning to revive; they have stood six tremendous shocks, and I think if they stand the seventh, which is to come tomorrow evening, they will survive.

We shall call on them to know whether they intend to gather with the living and sustain the cause of God by the mouth of his Prophets and Apostles, or die in Philadelphia. If they should choose the latter, we shall attend the funeral ceremonies, and leave them to rest with the dead, and we will go on our way among the living. If they should choose the former, we shall expect a glorious work in this place.²⁰⁴

On the day Joseph Smith and Hyrum were killed, Lyman and Heber C. Kimball were traveling to New York from Philadelphia. Heber reported feeling very mournful as though they had lost a friend but he knew not the cause.²⁰⁵

Their labors in the east continued, speaking in places such as Bunker Hill. On July 9, 1844, while at Salem, Massachusetts, the first word of the Prophet's death was received. They proceeded on their journey to Boston, then to New York, then by rail to Philadelphia, from there to Wilmington and finally to Baltimore. Since many contradictory reports of the Prophet's death were received, they went to the Lord in prayer and asked for an answer concerning that which had occurred. Heber C. Kimball then went to the post office where he found letters from his wife confirming the reports.²⁰⁶ Wight and Kimball then started for Nauvoo, informing the saints of the martyrdom as they traveled.

By July 18, Heber C. Kimball had joined Brigham Young in Boston. No record could be found of Wight's

²⁰⁴Ibid. ²⁰⁵DHC, VII, 132. ²⁰⁶DHC, VII, 184.

movements from that time until July 24, when he arrived in Boston and found Brigham Young, Heber C. Kimball, and others waiting for him so they could continue their journey to Nauvoo. The fact that the Twelve waited for Lyman would seem to indicate that he was still in full fellowship with them at that time. Further evidence of the feelings of the brethren towards Lyman are found in a letter written by Brigham Young to Willard Richards prior to Wight's arrival at Boston wherein the president of the Twelve stated: "Brother Lyman Wight has never been with us before; he is a great, good, noble-hearted man."²⁰⁷

On July 24, Elder Wight left Boston for Nauvoo in company with Elders Brigham Young and Heber C. Kimball. In the evening at Albany, New York, they were joined by Elders Orson Hyde, Orson Pratt, Wilford Woodruff and a Sister Ruth Sayers. They continued their journey by railway during the night. On Thursday evening, July 25, the six apostles arrived in Buffalo. The next morning they all took a steamboat at Buffalo for Detroit, Michigan. Elder Hyde left the group at Fairport, Ohio, to visit relatives in Kirtland. The other five apostles arrived in Detroit the evening of July 27 and stayed all night.²⁰⁸

The next morning at ten a.m. on July 28, Lyman Wight and his companions left by the steamboat "Hercules" for Chicago. According to Wilford Woodruff's journal, they spent

²⁰⁷Ibid., p. 210. ²⁰⁸Ibid.

this day in writing and in conversation with one another; and Elder Wight said that Joseph told him, while in Liberty Jail in Missouri, that he would not live to see forty years, but that Lyman should not reveal this until the Prophet was dead.²⁰⁹

The apostles arrived at Mackinaw on the northwest end of Lake Huron on August 30, where after taking on some freight the steamer continued south through Lake Michigan arriving in Chicago on August 1. On August 2 at seven a.m. they took a stage coach over very bad roads for Galena, Illinois, where they arrived at eight a.m. on August 4 after forty-eight hours of constant travel.²¹⁰ At Galena they boarded the steamer "St. Croix" which started down the Mississippi toward Nauvoo that afternoon, arriving there at eight o'clock in the evening, August 6, 1844, where they found a deep gloom over the city.²¹¹

. . . Thus I found a city, with ten thousand inhabitants, set in mourning for one of the most noble Prophets of God since the world began; and inhabitants thereof thrown into confusion by aspiring men, who sought the place of this noble man of God.²¹²

Five members of the Twelve, six on part of the journey, had spent two weeks together. This was a time when they should have drawn close to one another and become unified in their actions. As it turned out, this was what happened with all except Lyman Wight. Within a few days he

²⁰⁹DHC, VII, 210.

²¹⁰Ibid., p. 213.

²¹¹Ibid., p. 227.

²¹²Lyman Wight, p. 5.

was on a course of his own, acting individually and separately in most things, from the other members of the Quorum of the Twelve.

The next day those of the Quorum at Nauvoo, including Lyman Wight, met in council at the home of John Taylor. Later in the day they met at the Seventies Hall and heard Sidney Rigdon's claim to be a guardian of the Church. Then Brigham Young spoke on the position of the Twelve and called for a meeting of the priesthood quorums for the next day.

The following morning at ten o'clock the brethren came together and were organized according to quorums. In the list of apostles present, B. H. Roberts does not include Lyman Wight. In a footnote in the Documentary History of the Church, he stated that Elder Wight was still in the east which is obviously a mistake.²¹³ If Lyman were at the meeting his name was not included in the minutes, if not, the reason for his absence is no longer clear. Sometime later Wight was reported as being sick, which may have kept him from this meeting.

Lyman later wrote concerning the outcome of this meeting and the decision to follow the Twelve, which might indicate he was present. Wight concluded by stating:

Thus you see the Church stands regularly organized to bear off the kingdom triumphantly over the head of every opposition, and to establish Zion on more to be thrown down forever.²¹⁴

²¹³DHC, VII, 231.

²¹⁴Lyman Wight, p. 5.

Elder Wight is not mentioned again until Sunday, August 11, when he preached on leading a company into the wilderness. The following day he met in council with the Twelve and it was decided the pine company could go to Texas as Lyman desired.²¹⁵

On Sunday, August 18, Brigham Young spoke to the saints at Nauvoo and said that Lyman Wight and the pine company were the only ones with permission to lead a company out of Nauvoo. He also included this caution:

. . . and I tell you in the name of Jesus Christ that if Lyman and George Miller take a coarse [sic] contrary to our counsel, and will not act in concert with us, they will be damned and go into destruction . . .²¹⁶

Young said that the "whisperings" or rumors that Lyman and his company would receive their endowments before leaving Nauvoo were false.

On August 24, the apostles and the temple and Nauvoo House committees met at Brigham Young's to discuss the completion of the temple. Lyman was counseled to take his company north to the pine country rather than south to Texas.

The Black River Company, including the Wight family, had suffered a good deal of sickness upon their return to Nauvoo. Lyman felt this was caused by the marsh conditions there as compared to the good spring water they had become accustomed to in the pine country. In light of this, it was thought best to heed the counsel and go north for a few

²¹⁵DHC, VII, 248-249.

²¹⁶Journal History, August 18, 1844.

months until their good health returned, and then start for Texas.²¹⁷ Accordingly, Lyman and the Black River Company went to Wisconsin and spent the winter, then in early spring left for Texas. Lyman felt he had been called by Joseph Smith for this special mission and none of the Twelve had the right to change the call. In a letter to Wilford Woodruff in 1857, he expressed these feelings as follows:

. . . and it was well known by the Twelve at that time that Joseph was striving very hard to come to this place with 250,000 men he therefore requested me to come and establish a church in this region and such a mission was even talked of while in jail where I had the advantage of six months teaching and received many things that are yet unknown to the Church, never having refused to obey the prophet I started in good faith, . . .²¹⁸

²¹⁷Lyman Wight, p. 6.

²¹⁸Wilford Woodruff letter.

CHAPTER XI

LYMAN WIGHT GOES TO TEXAS

During the winter of 1844-1845, Lyman sold the mills in Wisconsin for a price that George Miller considered to be a great loss. This money along with that received from the sale of a partial raft of lumber, originally intended for the Nauvoo Temple, was used to pay the debts of the Pine Company.²¹⁹ (Then on March 28, 1845, Lyman Wight and about one hundred fifty men, women and children started down the Mississippi River on their journey to Texas.²²⁰ The company was going to fulfill what they considered to be a mission call from Joseph Smith, the purpose of which was to establish a gathering place for the saints in the southwest and teach the gospel to the Indians.²²¹) Their means of travel was four home-made rafts which were constructed with a row of berths on both sides, outside of which ran a walk the whole length of the boat. The space through the center was left for baggage, stoves and cooking utensils. The berths and the storage area were enclosed and covered with rough

²¹⁹Heman Hale Smith, "The Lyman Wight Colony in Texas," typed mss. in possession of writer.

²²⁰Wilford Woodruff letter.

²²¹Lyman Wight, pp. 3-4.

boards. There was a door in each end, and windows between the berths.²²²

Lyman's son reported that they were very poor and his father had told others that they must be able to travel days without eating and then be willing to eat a raw dog. Those who could not endure this hardship were not to follow him.²²³

The company arrived at Davenport, Iowa, on April 13, where they dismantled the boats and sold the lumber to buy oxen, wagons, tents and other supplies so the journey could continue. One cannot help but wonder why the company did not continue the short distance to Nauvoo and make these preparations among their friends. They spent one month making the necessary preparations, and then on May 12, 1845, began the over-land portion of the journey.²²⁴

The next six months were spent traversing the fourteen hundred miles to Texas. They traveled through Iowa, Missouri, Kansas, and the Indian territory, suffering many hardships along the way. Six people died of fever and ague during the journey which caused a good deal of sorrow among the members of the camp.²²⁵

Upon arrival in Texas, a temporary camp was selected

²²²Journal History, X, 48.

²²³Ibid., IX, 263.

²²⁴Heman Hale Smith, p. 8.

²²⁵Journal History, X, 47-56.

at an evacuated fort called Georgetown and here Lyman and his followers spent the winter.

The following spring, on April 24, 1846, they moved south to a point on the Colorado River, about four miles above Austin. Although they were considered to be religious novelties, a meeting was called at the home of Noah Smithwick, a local resident, where many gathered to hear Elder Wight preach. Smithwick reported that his neighbors listened with respect, but afterward some advocated driving this "lawless band" from the country. Since the Wight colony was of sufficient number to help defend others from possible attacks by Indians it was decided to let them stay until they broke the law.²²⁶

The colony consisted mainly of industrious people who constructed the first grist mill in the area. The Wight company also took a contract to build the first jail in Austin as well as several houses in that city.²²⁷

Lyman was able to purchase one hundred sixty acres of land for a Spanish pony worth about ten dollars. When a large spring on the land went dry, Lyman resold the land for three hundred head of cattle.²²⁸

²²⁶Noah Smithwick, The Evolution of a State (Austin: Gammel Book Company, 1935), p. 236.

²²⁷Heman Hale Smith, p. 11.

²²⁸Levi Lamoni Wight, Reminiscences and Letters, taken from Carroll Hormachea, "The Mormon Migration to Texas" (unpublished Master's thesis, Trinity University, San Antonio, Texas, 1956), p. 38.

Josiah Clifton, a Methodist minister in Austin, related to C. C. Booth an interesting description of Lyman and his visits to Austin during this time:

. . . Wight was a very handsome man, over six feet in height, weighing more than two hundred pounds, and having black hair and dark beard . . . He rode in a fine French carriage drawn by two coal black mules with a coachman dressed in black. The harness [sic] on the mules were ornamented with black tassels and silver buckles and bells of Mexican silver. Wight himself dressed in black broadcloth and highly polished boots and a black hat. In fact he was by frontier standards of the time termed a 'dude'; not that anyone dared call him this to his face. He was a real spectacle of a man, heavily armed with two navy pistols in silver mounted holsters, one on each hip, and fine silver mounted rifle in the boot in his surrey or carriage. He always had from two to six heavily armed and mounted riders or personal body guards on each side of his carriage, all on fine horses.²²⁹

Sometime during the summer, a flood destroyed the company grist mill. Being discouraged with the prospects for success in that area, a committee consisting of Spencer Smith, John Taylor, Mecham Curtis, and William Curtis was selected to find a new site where they could locate. The committee selected an area about four miles below Fredericksburg on the Perdinales River and within six weeks had a grist mill in operation. Zodiac, the name selected for the new location, was the most prosperous area in which the Wight colony lived.²³⁰

Soon after his arrival at Zodiac, Lyman was joined by George Miller and a number of other families that had

²²⁹C. C. Booth, "Lyman Wight in Early Texas," Improvement Era, LVII (January 1954), 27.

²³⁰Heman Hale Smith, p. 12.

become dissatisfied with the leadership of Brigham Young.

When the Miller group arrived at Zodiac, they found what appeared to be a very prosperous community. There was a grist mill and saw mill both in operation. Wight's company also had a turning lathe, blacksmith and wagon shop, and comfortable homes. George Miller was furnished a house until he could build one. Although there was apparent prosperity, Miller reported that the Wight company was in debt three thousand dollars to the inhabitants of Austin. Overtures were made to Miller to unite his belongings with those of the colony. Although he denied having joined, Miller did allow them the use of his wagons and other property and gave them money as well.²³¹

Bishop Miller soon became dissatisfied with Lyman, as he had with Brigham Young, and left to join James Strang who claimed authority to replace Joseph Smith as head of the Church. A number of Miller's followers, however, stayed with Wight's colony including his polygamist wife, the former Mrs. Leyland and her son and three daughters.²³² Mrs. Leyland soon died, and Lyman adopted her children. Later Wight's sons Levi and Loami married two of these girls.

²³¹George Miller Correspondence, Special Collections Library, Brigham Young University, p. 24.

²³²William Leyland Journal is quoted in Heman Hale Smith, p. 19. (It is reported that Miller forced Mrs. Leyland, a widow, into this polygamist relationship in 1845, before leaving Nauvoo. He supposedly had mistreated this wife and her children, giving them reason to remain at Zodiac.)

George Miller was not the only one of this colony to live the principle of plural marriage.²³³ According to a statement by Gideon Carter, who lived in the home of Orange Wight, Lyman taught that this doctrine was introduced by Joseph Smith:

He said that he saw and heard the revelation establishing plural marriage before Joseph Smith's death. I have heard Lyman Wight relate many times how Joseph Smith announced the revelation to his brother, Hyrum. Hyrum did not at first receive it with favor. His whole nature revolted against it. He said to Joseph that if he attempted to introduce the practice of that doctrine as a tenant of the church it would break up the church and cost him his life. 'Well,' Joseph replied, 'it is a commandment from God, brother Hyrum, and if you don't believe it, if you will ask the Lord he will make it known to you . . .'

That revelation was made known to some of the twelve before Joseph's death and after it was read in our council meeting, with some of the twelve, Joseph bore testimony that it was of God, and that it was a principal [sic] wherein there was wisdom, truth and virtue, and capable of bringing great good to the world, but owing to the sinfulness of men, and their weakness, it would damn more than it would save.²³⁴

Carter also stated that Wight claimed authority from Joseph Smith to perform plural marriages and while enroute to Texas, he exercised this authority by performing several such marriages. "I remember," Carter wrote:

that while he and his company were stopping at Prairie La Crosse in the fall and winter of 1844-45, Lyman Wight's son, Orange L. Wight, who was the husband of my

²³³Although some claim Brigham Young introduced plural marriage in 1852 after arriving in Utah, the fact that George Miller, a bishop in the Church, was practicing it at this time and, as will be shown, Lyman Wight also taught and practiced it, would indicate otherwise.

²³⁴Statement made to B. H. Roberts by Gideon Carter, February 27, 1894, located at the Church Historian's Office.

sister, Matilda, married a plural wife, a young lady to whom he had been engaged before marrying my sister but with whom he had broken through some misunderstanding. I understand that Lyman Wight performed the ceremony. Enroute for Texas one Joe Miles married a plural wife, and Lyman Wight himself before he arrived in Texas also married a plural wife; and I remember distinctly that while living in Texas he had three wives and I think he had four.²³⁵

Genealogical records indicate that Lyman did have four wives. His first plural wife was Mary Hawley who he married, according to Carter, sometime during the trip to Texas. She bore him two children, the first being a girl, Miamomento, born in 1848, and the second was a son, Romanon, born January 13, 1851, at Fredericksburg, Texas.²³⁶

There is also evidence of two additional wives in this polygamist relationship. Mary Ann Otis bore Lyman three children, Carrina, Rollondo, and a baby that died at birth. Margaret Ballentine bore him one son, John W., born August 8, 1856, at Bandera, Texas.²³⁷

When questions arose among his followers concerning this doctrine, Lyman published a pamphlet which contained what purported to be the revelation received by Joseph Smith. Gideon Carter said that it contained many more rules to be observed by those entering into plural marriage than the

²³⁵Ibid. (Orange's three wives were Matilda and Rogilla Carter and Sarah Hatfield. Found in Third Generation Genealogical records, on film at Brigham Young University.)

²³⁶Anna Judkins Wight to Church Historian's Office, January 13, 1969. In Church Historian's Office in Salt Lake City.

²³⁷Ibid.

revelation found in the Doctrine and Covenants.²³⁸

According to Carter, dissatisfaction with the doctrine continued so Lyman finally withdrew it, claiming that the world was too wicked to receive it. However, those who had already married plural wives retained their spouses.²³⁹

While at Zodiac, another of Joseph Smith's more unusual teachings, that of temple work, was introduced. On February 17, 1849, in the upstairs company storehouse, a make-shift temple was completed, and it was here that Lyman administered washings and anointings of his followers, as well as performing baptisms for the dead.²⁴⁰

In October, 1849, an interesting communique was received from William Smith, Joseph Smith's brother who had been a member of the Twelve Apostles, but was excommunicated October 19, 1845. It contained a purported revelation calling Lyman to the First Presidency of a church that he was organizing:

Behold I say unto you my servant, Lyman Wight, I am well pleased with his offering and he shall be saved for he is mine, saith the Lord your God, and his enemies shall not have power over him and their secret designs shall be manifest upon the house-tops . . . I give this commandment unto you my servant W. Smith and my servant Isaac Green [Sheen] and my servant Lyman Wight, that you choose from among you twelve men, yea, chosen men,

²³⁸Statement of Gideon Carter to B. H. Roberts, February 27, 1894, found at the Church Historian's Office.

²³⁹Ibid.

²⁴⁰Heman Hale Smith, p. 21.

twelve apostles, full of grace and truth and send them immediately among all the churches bearing my name and will concerning the redemption of Zion. Let my servant Lyman Wight, whom I have appointed to stand with my servant Wm. in the quorum of the First Presidency of the Church, send men, chosen, faithful and true . . .²⁴¹

William Leyland, who reported this revelation, specified that a conference was called in November in Zodiac where it was decided "that we receive W. Smith as a head to the Church until young Joseph can come forward, command and claim his station." A vote was also taken and carried that the revelation, calling Lyman to the First Presidency, be accepted.²⁴²

However, the history of the Reorganized Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints indicates that this call by William Smith was rejected.²⁴³ At any rate, there is no indication that Lyman ever functioned in the capacity to which William had appointed him. This could be because William soon gave up this attempt to organize a church and many years later affiliated with the Reorganized Church.

While the "Wild Ram of the Mountains" had been establishing himself in Texas, the majority of the Twelve Apostles were either in the Great Salt Lake Valley or in Iowa. On December 3, 1848, they conducted a public meeting in Salt Lake City, where the hand of fellowship was

²⁴¹Ibid., pp. 23-24.

²⁴²Ibid., p. 24.

²⁴³History of Reorganized Church, III, 35.

withdrawn from Lyman Wight and George Miller.²⁴⁴ February 12, 1849, a replacement for Lyman in the Quorum was approved and ordained. It would appear that the disfellowshipping of Apostle Wight did not take place because he went to Texas, but because of the attitude he manifested after he arrived there.

As early as October, 1844, when conference was held at Nauvoo, Lyman was sustained in his position as an apostle, even though Brigham Young spoke and called him a coward for leaving Nauvoo.²⁴⁵

Then in April, 1845, when conference was held by the Church at Nauvoo, some question was raised as to Wight's stand and Heber C. Kimball spoke in his favor:

. . . we should let him remain for the present, probably hereafter there may be a time that he will hearken to counsel, and do much good which he is capable of--for he is a noble-minded man.²⁴⁶

Following conference, on April 17, 1845, the Twelve met and wrote a letter to Wight and his followers, advising

²⁴⁴History of Brigham Young, Ms., December 3, 1848, p. 85. Although Joseph Fielding Smith in Essentials in Church History, p. 694, states that Lyman Wight was excommunicated, this writer was unable to determine if this was the case since all early records merely indicate disfellowshipping. Excommunication records do not go back that far and no one in the Church Historian's Office seemed to know where this information could be obtained. When Orange Wight came to Utah, he was rebaptized which might indicate the company was excommunicated.

²⁴⁵Journal History, October 7, 1844.

²⁴⁶Times and Seasons, [Nauvoo, Illinois], VI (April 15, 1845), 870.

them to return to Nauvoo and help complete the temple and receive their endowments before proceeding west. Samuel Bent was given the letter and instructed to carry it to the Wight colony.²⁴⁷ By this time, however, they had left Wisconsin and were on their way to Texas so it is possible that the letter never reached its destination. At least by October conference the Church leaders had no word from Lyman, and when his name was presented for approval, Heber C. Kimball again spoke in his behalf:

We cannot tell what he is doing; he may, in his own mind, be acting in concert with the rest, and he may be acting for the good of this people. It would be my mind, to let his case lay over for the present, until we can learn something from him.²⁴⁸

This action was unanimously approved. At April conference of 1848, held in Iowa, Brigham Young spoke in behalf of Wight being retained in the quorum.

Lyman Wight comes next, 'the wild ram of the mountains.' I don't know whether he is in the mountains or in the valleys; but he has been from us a good while; we feel yet to hold on to him; we have faith to hold on and not give up on him. We hope he will come back and do a good work; he is wild, but we feel to fellowship him and retain him in the Quorum of the Twelve. He was for us the last time we heard from him; we give him our fellowship and remember him in our prayers. If you feel as we do, hold up your hands.²⁴⁹

Six months later at October conference, the saints at Salt Lake reached the same conclusion to retain Lyman

²⁴⁷Brigham Young to Lyman Wight, April 17, 1845, Church Historian's Office.

²⁴⁸Times and Seasons [Nauvoo, Illinois], VI (November 1, 1845), 1009.

²⁴⁹Journal History, April 6, 1848.

Wight as an apostle. The saints in Iowa, however, came to a different conclusion. A sixteen page pamphlet printed by Wight in April, 1848, had come into their possession. This pamphlet contained an abridged history of the Wight colony from 1844 until that time, which Lyman had taken from his daily journal. The pamphlet also contained Lyman's defense of being in Texas and numerous appeals for the saints in the various branches of the Church to join him in that place,²⁵⁰ This counsel was contrary to that of the rest of the Quorum.

George Miller had apparently informed Lyman that the rest of the Twelve Apostles had disfellowshipped him and replaced him in the quorum, which was not true at the time. Because of this, we find in the pamphlet a strong defense of his position as an apostle. He appealed to all who had heard his voice, to bear record that he had been faithful in performing his duties. Lyman continued to refer to whomever replaced him in the quorum as a "long-eared Jackass" and said he would meet him at the judgment bar of God to defend his right.²⁵¹

The saints in Iowa did two things as a result of this pamphlet. First, Orson Hyde wrote a leaflet to the branches of the Church to answer Wight's claims and to counteract the advice of gathering to Texas.²⁵² Then in October when Lyman's name was presented as an apostle it was

²⁵⁰Lyman Wight, pp. 6-16. ²⁵¹Ibid., p. 13.

²⁵²Journal History, August 1, 1848. This letter is included in Appendix B of this work.

rejected and fellowship was withdrawn. George A. Smith and Ezra T. Benson then wrote Brigham Young, who was in the Salt Lake Valley, a letter in defense of the action they had taken.²⁵³

Apparently the receipt of this letter and also reports from men such as Peter Hawes and Lucian Woodworth, that they had visited the Wight colony in late October and found Lyman was frequently drunk,²⁵⁴ motivated Brigham Young to take the action of withdrawing fellowship from him.

It is important to note that Brigham Young had instructed Orson Hyde, who was in the east, to send messages to Wight and ask him to join the saints in Salt Lake. President Young then took action against Wight without waiting to hear from those messengers. However, when word was received from Preston Thomas and William Martindale, who visited Lyman on December 31, 1848, their report confirmed the action that had been taken. These missionaries quoted Lyman Wight as saying that Brigham Young was a deliberate, wilful, vilanous [sic] and scoundrelly liar, because he had called him a coward for leaving Nauvoo. Wight reportedly claimed to be president of the Quorum of the Twelve by virtue of age and little Joseph was the man to lead the Church. Thomas and Martindale said Lyman would come to Salt Lake only at the call of father John Smith.²⁵⁵

²⁵³Ibid., October 7, 1848. ²⁵⁴Ibid., October 20, 1848.

²⁵⁵Brigham Young, March 14, 1849.

When Wight learned that he was disfellowshipped, he wrote both Wilford Woodruff and Brigham Young to express his feelings and to learn the nature of the charges leveled against him. To Wilford Woodruff he wrote:

. . . Can you tell me why I was cut off from the church and such men as Orson Hyde; W. W. Phelps; T. B. Marsh received in, have they ever asked Joseph; Hyrum Smith; Sidney Rigdon or myself to forgive them for writing letters to the Governor and swearing agains [sic] us with a view of swearing away our lives? W. W. Phelps said under oath that he was baptized to save his property. One of Joseph's prophecies in jail was, if he was taken away, Brigham Young, Cahoon and others would cut me off from the church whether they had any accusation against me or not which I have lived to see fulfilled.²⁵⁶

The letter to Brigham Young was more detailed and therefore is included in an appendix of this work.²⁵⁷

In 1850, Lyman became involved in local politics and ran as Chief Justice of Gillespie County. The records indicate that he was defeated by J. J. Klingelhoef, but Lyman contested the election on the grounds that Klingelhoef was not a citizen of the United States. Lyman was therefore appointed as Chief Judge. After contention developed between the Wight group at Zodiac and the German settlers at Fredericksburg, Lyman became so disgusted that he quit functioning in this office and was replaced.²⁵⁸

²⁵⁶Wilford Woodruff letter.

²⁵⁷See Appendix A.

²⁵⁸Don H. Biggers, German Pioneers of Texas (Fredericksburg, Texas: Fredericksburg Publishing Company, 1925), pp. 94-95.

Early in 1851, the camp at Zodiac suffered a severe disaster. A flood on the Perdinales River destroyed their mill and inundated the town. The burrs or millstones they had brought with them to Texas were lost. They had received a government contract to furnish corn to the men in the United States Army who were in Texas to fight in the Mexican War. This would have been a real opportunity for prosperity, but the flood ruined their prospects.

Fearing disease, Lyman now moved his group to Hamilton's Creek about eight miles below Burnet where they put in another mill. Their burrs being lost, they secured blocks of marble and manufactured new ones. These burrs proved to be unsatisfactory so Lyman decided to return to Zodiac and try to locate the old ones. After many days of searching without success, the following is reported to have occurred:

Old Lyman Wight, the high priest, set about the task of recovering the lost stones. After wrestling alone with the spirits for some little time he arose one morning with joy in his heart, and summoned his people, announced to them that he had had a revelation, and bidding them take spades and crowbars and follow him set out to locate the millstones. Straight ahead he bore as one in a dream, his divining rod in his hand; his awestruck disciples following in silence. Pausing at last in the middle of the sand bar deposited by the flood he struck his rod down.

'Dig right here,' he commanded. His followers, never doubting, set to work, and upon removing a few feet of sand, lo and behold, there were revealed the buried millstones. Wight said he saw them in a vision and his followers believed it.²⁵⁹

²⁵⁹Smithwick, pp. 299-300.

In addition to their mill, a shop to manufacture furniture was also constructed. Their chairs, tables, and bedsteads were used throughout the country.²⁶⁰

By 1853, the small colony was on the move again having sold their possessions on Hamilton's Creek to Noah Smithwick for five thousand dollars. A record of their movements through Llano, Mason, Gillespie, Kerr, and Bandera Counties was kept by Spencer Smith, Lyman's son-in-law.²⁶¹ They finally settled at a point on the Medina River twelve miles below the town of Bandera. They called the new community Mountain Valley and remained at this location until 1858.

Through these years of constant moving, a large number of Wight's followers became dissatisfied and left the main group. Lyman's oldest son, Orange, was in this number. He remained in Texas, but not as part of the colony.²⁶²

The greatest problem of the colony while at Mountain Valley was the Indians. In a letter to the governor, Lyman outlined the extent of the damages caused by the Indians and its effect on the colony. Over a five year period their losses had totaled six thousand dollars and included horses, mules, oxen, a circular saw, a turning lathe, and the destruction of their crops. This letter was to seek redress

²⁶⁰Ibid. ²⁶¹Heman Hale Smith, pp. 27-32.

²⁶²Orange L. Wight to Joseph I. Earl, May 4, 1903, typed copy in possession of writer.

from the government for as Lyman said, ". . . in case of no redress [we] will be obliged to sacrifice our little homes and go to some other place . . ."263

In March, 1858, Lyman claimed a vision which indicated the war between the North and South was soon to commence so the decision was made to move the colony north.²⁶⁴ At least one of his group, his son, Levi, rebelled and was not going to go but reconsidered in light of his father's age.²⁶⁵ On the second day of the journey at Dexter, about eight miles from San Antonio, Lyman suddenly died. His body was carried back to Zodiac and buried in the old burying ground there. At his death, the Galveston News commented as follows:

We believe we have omitted to notice the death of Mr. Lyman Wight who for some thirteen years past has been the leader of a small and independent Mormon settlement in Texas. As far as we have been able to learn, these Mormons have proved themselves to be most excellent citizens of our State, and we are no doubt greatly indebted to the deceased leader for the orderly conduct, sobriety, industry, and enterprise of his colony. Mr. Wight first came to Texas in November, 1845, and has been with his colony on our extrem [sic] frontier ever since, moving still farther west as settlements formed around him, thus always being the pioneering of advancing civilization, affording protection against the Indians. He has been the first to settle five new counties, and prepare the way for others. He has at ~~different times built three extensive saw and grist mills, etc.~~²⁶⁶

²⁶³DHC, V, 103.

²⁶⁴Heman Hale Smith, p. 44.

²⁶⁵Journal of History, IX, 267.

²⁶⁶Ibid., X, 58.

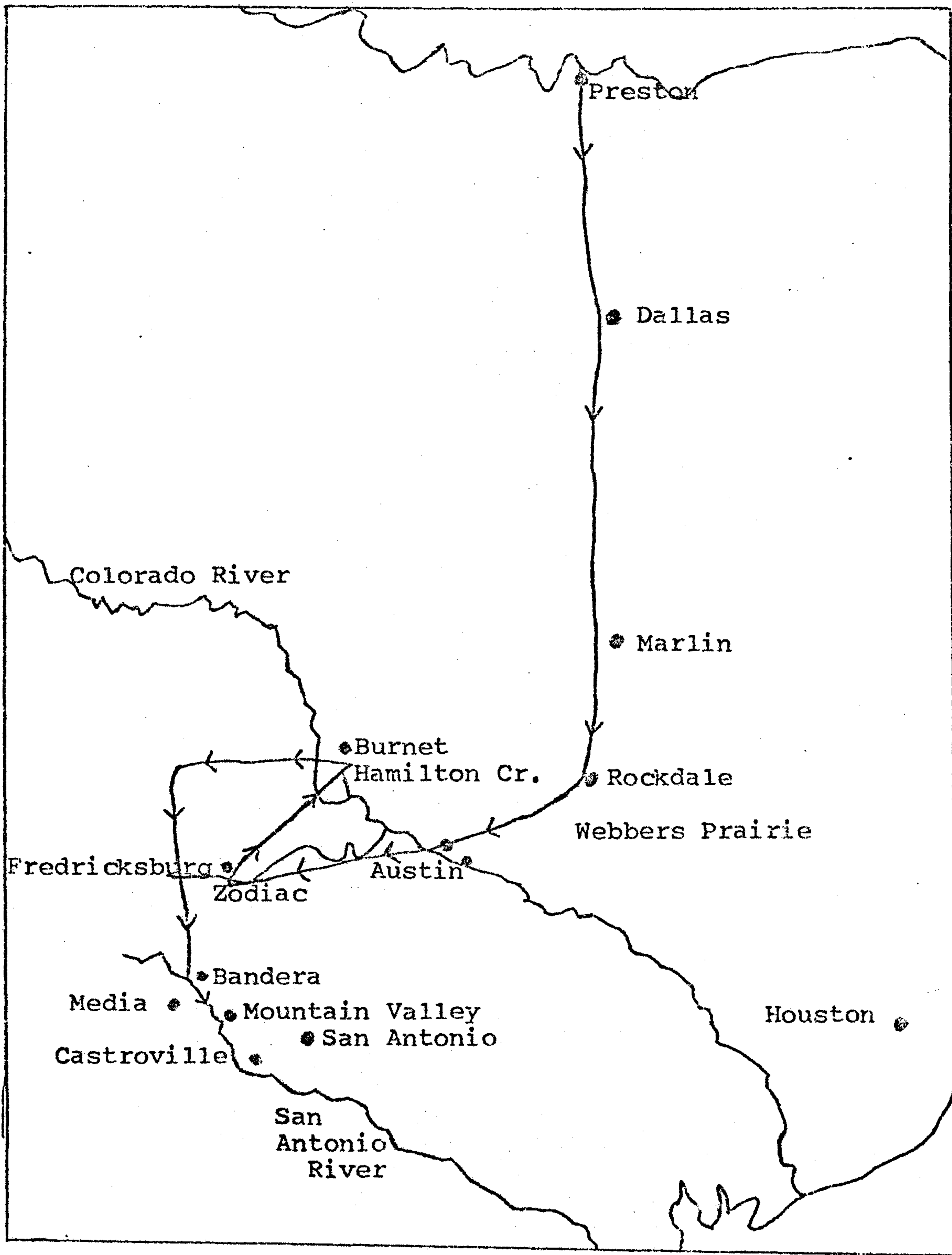


Figure 1

Route of Wight Colony in Texas

With Lyman's death, a part of the colony continued north and finally settled in 1861, in the northwest corner of Shelby County, Iowa, in a community called Galland's Grove. According to officials of the Reorganized Church, most of these people later joined their faith.²⁶⁷ The remainder of the colony stayed in Texas and later three of these families went to California under the leadership of Noah Smithwick, although he was not a member of the original colony.²⁶⁸

As for Lyman Wight's own children, we will follow each of them separately.

The oldest son, Orange, remained in Texas for a time and fought in the Civil War for the Confederate Army. Later he went to Nebraska to take care of his mother, and after her death, moved to Utah.²⁶⁹ Orange died in Bunkerville, Nevada, in 1941, as a faithful member of the Church, but apparently neglected to teach his older children the principles of the gospel; for a son John was converted in Wyoming and did not know of his father's connections with the Church until after being baptized.²⁷⁰ Gideon Carter, who grew up in Orange's home, never joined the Church.²⁷¹

²⁶⁷Heman Hale Smith, p. 49.

²⁶⁸Ibid., p. 49.

²⁶⁹Ibid., p. 50.

²⁷⁰Raymond Wight to the Deseret News, February 24, 1941, Church Historian's Office.

²⁷¹Statement made to B. H. Roberts by Gideon Carter, February 27, 1894, located at Church Historian's Office.

Anna C. Wight, Lyman's oldest daughter, married Spencer Smith and, when her father died, moved to Nebraska where she and her husband associated with the Reorganized Church.²⁷² Two of their children became very prominent in the Reorganized Church. Hyrum O. Smith held the office of a President of Seventy,²⁷³ and Heman C., who married Alexander Hale Smith's daughter, Vida E., on June 2, 1886, granddaughter of Joseph Smith, became an apostle and a historian for the Reorganized Church.²⁷⁴

Rosina Minerva married John Miller, February 6, 1844, at Black River Falls, Wisconsin. She died at Fredericksburg, Texas, in 1850.²⁷⁵

The fourth child, Lyman Lehi, fought for the Southern Army in the Civil War, and then moved to Missouri and joined the Reorganized Church in 1865. Lyman Lehi died September 8, 1895, at Ridgeway, Missouri.²⁷⁶

Levi Lamoni also stayed in Texas and fought for the South. Little is known of his church affiliations.²⁷⁷

The youngest child of Lyman's first wife, Loami Limhi, fought for the Confederates and later settled in Bandera, Texas.²⁷⁸

²⁷²Heman Hale Smith, p. 50.

²⁷³History of the Reorganized Church, V, 498.

²⁷⁴Ibid., p. 402. ²⁷⁵Heman Hale Smith, p. 50.

²⁷⁶History of the Reorganized Church, V, 58.

²⁷⁷Heman Hale Smith, p. 51

²⁷⁸Ibid.

Of the remaining six children, all born to plural wives, little could be learned. Romanon, the son of Mary Hawley, was adopted by Mary Ann Jenkins when his mother died. Romanon moved to Iowa, became a member of the Reorganized Church, and served as one of the Seven Presidents of Seventy from 1902 to 1909.²⁷⁹

The only child of Lyman and Margaret Ballentine, John W. Wight, was ordained an apostle in the Reorganized Church and served much of his time trying to convert Utah Mormons.²⁸⁰

It appears that a large number of Wights in The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints today descend from Lyman's son, Orange, and his nephews that joined the Church. Stephen and Ephraim were sons of Lyman's brother Daniel, and Lewis was a son of his brother William.²⁸¹

The only one of Lyman's father's family that joined the Church was apparently a sister. Sarah followed him to Texas where she remained and became affiliated with the Reorganized Church.²⁸²

²⁷⁹Journal of History, X, 479.

²⁸⁰History of the Reorganized Church, V, 58.

²⁸¹Third Generation Genealogical Sheets, Brigham Young University.

²⁸²William Ward Wight, p. 71.

CHAPTER XII

SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

The history of Lyman Wight cannot be studied without gaining an appreciation for the man and his many contributions to The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. From the time he joined the Church in 1831, until his death in 1858, Lyman's efforts were practically all devoted to building God's kingdom on earth and bringing people to a knowledge of the truths that he espoused. Soon after joining the Church, Wight was told to be a missionary and preach the gospel. It appears that every effort was made to carry out that responsibility. Much has been written of the missionary success of men such as Wilford Woodruff and Parley P. Pratt, but little credit has been given to this missionary, Lyman Wight, for the many converts he brought into the Church. His colonization of Texas, was probably designed to fulfill what he considered as a missionary call from the Prophet Joseph Smith. An excerpt from a letter, written in Texas immediately prior to his death in 1858, indicates Lyman's attitude at the time:

No doubt you will think we are well situated, and so we are temporarily, but want to see the Lamanites come to the knowledge of the truth, who have been in darkness for fourteen hundred years, and see the millennium set in that will bring kindred spirits together again to reign with Christ on earth a thousand years. This is what I have been striving for for over twenty-five years,

and I am in nothing discouraged. I calculate to continue till I lose the horse or win the saddle. There is nothing I more desire than to meet all my friends and kindred spirits in that glorious morning when Christ our Savior shall call all his saints home to live in peace on this earth one thousand years, . . . ²⁸³

The courage and devotion of Lyman as he stood up in defense of Joseph Smith and the saints while in Missouri is commendable. Wight was ready and willing to give his life, if necessary, in their defense.

This devotion and loyalty was detected by Joseph Smith, for Lyman Wight was called to the apostleship in 1841, where he was given even greater opportunity to be a special witness of Jesus Christ and the divine call of the Prophet.

Another contribution of Apostle Wight was a journal which contained an account of daily events that transpired in his life. Since he was so closely associated with Joseph Smith and the early affairs of the Church, this journal contains a valuable history. Although the journal itself is not available, its contents were used by Wight in a number of summaries of the history of the saints.²⁸⁴ One such summary was given at a trial of Joseph Smith held in 1843. These accounts are not presented with the objectivity of a modern day historian, because of his being so closely associated with these events, making it difficult for him to

²⁸³Hormachea, p. 100.

²⁸⁴This journal was once in the possession of the Reorganized Church, but was apparently lost, according to correspondence with Richard P. Howard, Reorganized Church Historian, February 17, 1969.

present a comprehensive view of the events which he witnessed.

There are also several contributions made by the Wight colony to Texas. They helped open and settle five counties: Llano, Travis, Bandera, Burnet, and Gillespie. The colony also served as a buffer against the Indians in the areas where they lived. Wight's company helped the growth of industry in this new territory by introducing milling in their locality for the first time. Prior to their coming, corn had been ground by hand. The manufacturing of furniture also helped to add to the industry of the state.

If communication had been better, perhaps Lyman Wight and the rest of the Quorum of Twelve could have been reconciled. It appears that the best of men, if left to themselves, can stray from the truth. Lyman had been warned in his patriarchal blessing to beware of pride and this seems to have been a cause of his straying. Perhaps if he had been more willing to humble himself and accept counsel, his contributions could have been enhanced.

A fitting conclusion to the life of Lyman Wight might be the following conversation between Raymond Wight, Lyman's grandson, and a patriarch in Big Horn Stake, Wyoming, as reported by Raymond's wife, Anna:

My husband and I went to him for Patriarchal blessings in 1928. It was after the blessings were given, and he was telling us some of these very spiritual experiences, when he stopped suddenly, then after a few moments of

deep meditations he said, 'I see your grandfather, Lyman Wight, in the Spirit World, preaching to the souls there and converting them to Christ. That he was sorry for the sins he had made, and was working diligently preparing souls for Raymond (my husband) to labor in the temple for. 285

285 Anna Wight to Church Historian's Office,
January 13, 1969.

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APPENDIX A

LETTER TO BRIGHAM YOUNG

. . . I have also learned by some private communications that you have disfellowshipped me and the company with me. We have great anxiety to know what we are disfellowshipped from. We are truly at a loss to know whether we are disfellowshipped as citizens under your gubernatorialship, or whether you act in behalf of brother Joseph, and have disfellowshipped us to his satisfaction, or whether it was because we did not immediately relinquish that mission and go with you to Salt Lake Valley.

Now Sir, if it is a crime for me to come to Texas as one of the Twelve Apostles, under the direction of Joseph Smith instead of going to Salt Lake Valley you had ought to beware how you send out men from that region of country into any other country to build up churches; for I protest unto you, and all men living upon the foot stool of God, that I have not taught as much as one word contrary to the doctrine of Jesus Christ as held forth by brother Joseph Smith during his whole life. And Sir, as I have neither spoken evil of you, nor of no other man who has strove to live to the commandments of God, nor have I been guilty of any misdemeanor whatever as you have heard by flying reports. I shall make use of great plainness. In the first place, you have disfellowshipped us without the least shadow of evidence that we were guilty of any misdemeanor whatever. I ask, did not the Twelve unanimously give me the right hand of fellowship just previous to my start for this place? And I again ask, did they ever notify me that they thought it would be better to relinquish it since that day? And did you not state to me Sir, that you would have to speak a little against my going for fear the whole Church to a man would turn out? I gave you that privilege without reluctance believing you to be an honest man. But very much to my astonishment I saw recorded in the Times and Seasons that you stated that I was a coward and ran away for fear of fighting and many other slanderous reports with expressions so sarcastic that should you and I meet before a proper public I should give you a fair opportunity to prove the truth or falsity of your words.

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You will find Sir, that I have produced pointed testimony as published by your ownself to show fact, whereas you have only had flying reports concerning me by men who chose to carry a bone both ways; for instance Haws and Woodworth, men in whom you say you can place confidence, and

if you can place confidence in them then why not I? And what did they say before fifty witnesses in this place? They stated that it would take ten yoke of oxen to draw alcohol over the mountains to keep Brother Richards drinking one year and that it cost more to support Brigham Young alone than it did any one hundred men in the Church.

LYMAN WIGHT
March 2, 1857

APPENDIX B

LEAFLET BY ORSON HYDE

Beloved Brethren and Friends: After so long a time, we have heard from Elder Lyman Wight, and have learned his whereabouts. He is in Texas, and I think on one of the tributaries of the Colorado River, about seventy-five miles from the city of Austin. He has addressed a pamphlet of sixteen pages to the Latter-day Saints, scattered abroad, and to everybody else, containing his appeals to them, and the cogitation of his own mind.

If the Lord has inspired him to write his appeal, it would have been received with respect and cordiality. But it would seem that his inspiration came from no higher source than George Miller. He speaks much about being put out of his place and someone else called to fill it. If this had been contemplated, and even carried into effect, the Council of the Church would not have gone beyond their power and right, if they had thought it necessary to be done: But to reproach the person supposed to occupy his place with the appellation of a "Long Eared Jack Ass," is but to reproach the Council by whom he was appointed, if appointed at all. The spirit of alienation and jealousy is too apparent in his writings. No person has been suggested to fill his place, to my knowledge; and if he had been dictated by the Spirit of the Lord, he would have written a confidential letter to the Council of his brethren, and enquired into all these matters, before venturing to throw out such a volley of most extravagant and uncalled for language as his pamphlet contains. But it seems that he has taken Bishop Miller for his prompter, . . .

If Brother Wight had been anxious to keep up a friendly intercourse and correspondence with the Church and Council, and maintain a permanent union and alliance with them, as he now is to sow the seeds of dissent, by scattering his pamphlets among the outer branches of the Church, could he not long ago sent a messenger to hunt us up, as well as to send one now to distribute his pamphlets, the products of his own misguided zeal, breathing manifestly the spirit of separation from the Church and Council? If we were broken up and gone from Nauvoo, we were not gone out of the world. The very spirit of his apology for not writing to us, clearly shows that he lacked more the inclination to write than the opportunity of sending a letter. This is in accordance with some expressions of his concerning his desire to be accounted as one of the Twelve on his leaving Nauvoo. It may be proper, at some time, to note them.

He appeals to those of like ordination with himself to know if they have any power or authority given them to remove him from his station. For one, I can say that I have been ordained to all the power and authority that Brother Wight ever was, and I can inform him that he is not yet so high that the voice of the council cannot reach him and bring him down, and even put another in his place, if they deem it necessary . . .

Why does Brother Wight teach and enforce a doctrine that Joseph Smith never did nor ever would sanction? Namely: a community of goods, or property thrown in together as common stock. Though this doctrine has sometimes been practiced by good men, the original purpose and design of God was to make men accountable for their stewardship . . .

With regard to keys and priesthood, Brother Wight is just as lame as he is about the power not existing to displace him, and one day it will meet him in the face; . . . It is said not to be the nature of "the wild ram of the mountains" to herd in the domestic fold, and if it does not yet appear that Joseph Smith gave to Lyman Wight his great mission with a similar motive to that with which the Lord gave a Saul to Israel, I will confess my mistake.

The Churches are exhorted to continue their emigration and in the discharge of their various duties as counselled and directed in the late General Epistle of the Twelve, and pay no attention to Brother Wight's call, until it is sanctioned by the First Presidency of the Church, at Salt Lake City, and also by the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles. Brother Wight may collect around him the whole phalanx of wild, disaffected and independent spirits, even from the "Pagan Prophet" down to the "Brewster Seer." But these combustible materials gathered together, render explosion more certain and its consequence more destructive. None of us is at war with Brother Wight's mission, but with his boasting and defying spirit.

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