

Was Joseph Smith in the Vanguard of American Liberalism?

# COUNTER-REVOLUTION: THE MORMON REACTION TO THE COMING OF AMERICAN DEMOCRACY

By Marvin S. Hill

ACCORDING TO PROMINENT AMERICAN HISTORIAN Gordon Wood, Americans during the first half of the nineteenth century experienced a "social and cultural upheaval scarcely matched in their history." The rational religion of the Founding Fathers was replaced by a popular evangelicalism, and new sects appeared everywhere. Revivalism gave birth to millennialism, communitarianism, and seekers desiring new revelations. These and other developments were part of a massive democratic revolution that changed the shape of America. Underlying the ferment was a degree of social disintegration unequalled in American history—the product of rapid westward expansion and the breaking down of traditional institutions of family, church, and community. For Wood, Mormonism was one of many voluntary movements which emerged in response to these changes. The Church appeared with the "democratic revolution at its height" and attempted to stem the spread of rampant sectarianism by providing a new source of authority.<sup>1</sup>

While I agree with this assessment of the radical changes that were taking place, and that the Mormons sought a new source of authority, Wood's observation does not tell us enough about what the Mormons were reacting to or how they reacted. Rather than a by-product of the democratic revolution, Mormonism represented a counter-revolution to the coming of American democracy—an argument I hope to develop in what follows.<sup>2</sup>

First, a word about definitions. Wood sees the rise of Mormonism as part of the rise of the common man, and I would agree with him as far as this goes. But there was more to democracy and to Mormonism than he suggests. Lee Benson calls this period an age of egalitarianism<sup>3</sup>—that is, a quest for

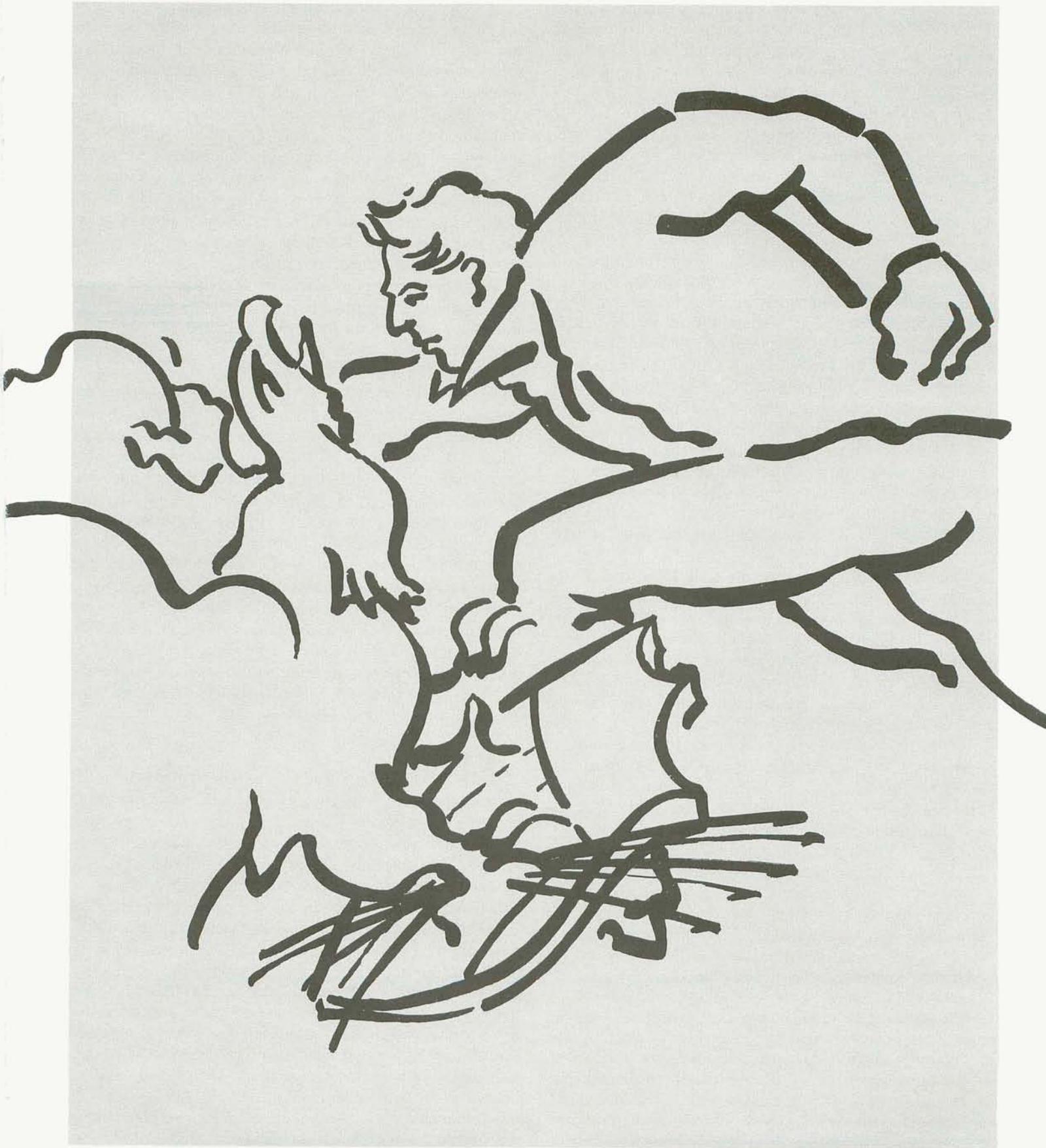
social, political, and economic equality. I use the term "democratic" more in this sense. Also, I believe that democracy in the first half of the nineteenth century meant "government by the people," as Abraham Lincoln later said<sup>4</sup>—that the people collectively are the final judge in all matters, that their will is sovereign.

IN a new history of early Mormonism, Kenneth Winn argues that the Book of Mormon reflected "republican" values accepted by most Americans. These included belief in moral virtue, hard work, the acquisition of wealth as long as it does not become an end in itself, government by the people through the electoral process, and popular sovereignty. Winn quotes Book of Mormon prophet Mosiah, whom he calls the "leading architect of the Nephites' republican government," that "it is not common that the voice of the people desireth anything contrary to that which is right; but it is common for the lesser part of the people to desire that which is not right." Winn sees this as evidence that in the Book of Mormon the people are the ultimate authority, that hence the Book of Mormon is republican.<sup>5</sup> But Winn overstates his case. Joseph Smith said in Missouri that he believed in aristarchy, government by the best people,<sup>6</sup> and the Book of Mormon advocates their tenure.

In addition, Winn minimizes the fact that the commitment in Mosiah to popular sovereignty is tentative and restricted. The people may or may not have voted to decide elections, but they were warned of dire judgements should they decide wrong (Mosiah 29:27). The judges were chosen "that ye may be judged according to the laws which have been given by our fathers, which are correct, and which were given them by the hand of the Lord" (v. 25). The judges were to enforce this Hebraic law, not the laws voted by the people, whose sovereignty was severely limited. Further, the chief judges were Church officials or members. Alma was both high priest of the Church and chief judge. His successor was an elder in the Church. Pahoran, next in line, was to "support and maintain

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the cause of God always" and was thus a churchman also (Mosiah 29:42; Alma 4:16, 50:39). There was no separation of church and state. Judges were "appointed," and it is unclear how the "voice of the people" mattered in their choosing. Often sons succeeded fathers so that family ties were central in deciding who would assume office (see Alma 4:16, 50:39).<sup>7</sup> And freedom of thought in religion, while advocated briefly in the Book of Mormon, was hardly practiced by predominant American standards. When a dissenter preached heretical views he was confronted by religious and civil leaders, put down, then banished. One Nephite leader even approved of his subsequent death.<sup>8</sup>

The Book of Mormon is thus an ambivalent spokesman for *republicanism*. It strongly favors office holding for the elect, not the people. Social and political disruption follows invariably when the wicked rule.<sup>9</sup> The Nephite form of republicanism only lasted for about 110 years—out of 1,000—and came to a violent end after the advent of Jesus Christ.<sup>10</sup> Thus the Book of Mormon did not promise much hope for republican success. One would better argue, I believe, that the Mormon scripture is an appeal for the rule of the Saints, for theocracy, not republicanism. Winn recognizes this theocratic tendency<sup>11</sup> but discounts it to contend that Mormons and anti-Mormons in Missouri and Illinois shared common values. They did, in part, but it was Mormon anti-democratic values that made the difference, values that developed from the beginning of their movement.

Gordon Wood is correct that the early Latter-day Saints reacted to signs of social disintegration in America, which they saw as fatal. The author of "Millennium" spoke of his fears in the *Latter Day Saints' Messenger and Advocate* in 1834: "certain it is the Gentile world with all its parties, sects, denominations, reformations, revivals of religion and associations are devoted to destruction."<sup>12</sup> Mormon apostle John Taylor reaffirmed this same perspective eleven years later in 1843:

What a deplorable aspect the world of mankind presents at the present time, especially on our continent, torn to pieces with dissensions about religion and politics, tossed on the billows of uncertainty, both religiously and politically, men scarcely know which way to steer. . . . With several hundred different religions all slashing and in commotion, the speculative theories of Miller, . . . the deceptive pretensions of Mesmerism; the poison of Infidelity; the plans of Fourier, and the ten thousand other notions that are deluging the earth, and cracking the human brain, render it indeed necessary that God should again speak and point out the way of salvation and happiness with certainty. . . .<sup>13</sup>

But in opposing the voluntary agencies of reform in America, the Saints set themselves against those institutions which Alexis De Tocqueville said were indispensable to a democratic society where individualism had become extreme.<sup>14</sup> In denouncing the means by which a democratic society achieved its democratic ends, the Saints were demonstrating their distaste for democracy itself.

**I**N the Mormon mind the multiplication of religious sects (or pluralism) promoted uncertainty and infidelity. The Mormon prophet complained in a revelation given in 1831 that the American people "seek not the Lord to establish his righteousness, but every man walketh in his own way" (D&C 1:16). Joseph Smith said he found as a youth at a religious revival in the early 1820s a "strife of words and contest about opinions" among several churches, so that he could not decide "who was right and who was wrong."<sup>15</sup> Later he commented that "if God had a church it would not be split up into factions."<sup>16</sup> Pluralism raised doubts in Joseph's mind whether God had a church—a disturbing prospect to any young man or woman in the nineteenth century.

While questioning the benefits of religious pluralism Joseph Smith came to the conclusion that all churches were wrong. In this he challenged the merits of the existing religious settlement. Thomas Jefferson had fought hard in Virginia to disestablish the Anglican church and place all churches on an equal basis with respect to the law.<sup>17</sup> Religion was to be supported on a voluntary basis or not at all. The Constitution sustained the same approach to religious pluralism.<sup>18</sup> American religious leaders found it difficult to accept the new principal,<sup>19</sup> but by the 1840s evangelical Protestants had decided that those who accepted the Bible as the sole foundation of faith, and who favored revivals as a means to missionary work, were fit for God's kingdom. Mormons and Roman Catholics were excluded.<sup>20</sup> The idea grew up among Protestants that their churches taught the fundamental truths. The saying was often heard that "we are all going to the same place but taking different roads."<sup>21</sup> This accommodation to pluralism was unacceptable to Joseph Smith. There is but one true church and the rest are part of the "great and abominable" institution (1 Nephi 13:6). From the outset Mormons were at odds with American pluralistic assumptions.

**M**ORMONS were out of step in other ways. During the great awakenings of the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries a tremendous leveling force swept across America.<sup>22</sup> At this time revivalists stressed the necessity of individual conversion. Christians must experience a personal encounter with the Lord not controlled by priest or preacher. Those who were able to experience conversion became part of the evangelical community and were accepted into the old line churches. Those who could not were "depraved" and "outsiders."<sup>23</sup> Joseph Smith was one of the latter. While his mother and other family members converted to Presbyterianism in 1824 he did not, saying that he wanted to "feel and shout like the rest" but could not.<sup>24</sup> Young Joseph had to find another road to salvation. The church he restored emphasized priesthood and church ordinances as a means to salvation.<sup>25</sup> There was need to believe, as the Book of Mormon made clear (Alma 32:26-43), but not much was said beyond this about conversion. Others who joined the new church after failing to achieve conversion

at Protestant meetings were George A. Smith, Willard Richards, Parley P. Pratt, and Lewis Shurtliff.<sup>26</sup>

Poverty also excluded them. The Book of Mormon, in speaking of modern "Gentile" churches, denounced them as middle class. Second Nephi said that the Gentiles

have built up many churches . . . and preach up unto themselves, their own wisdom, and their own learning, that they might get gain, and grind the face of the poor. . . .

Because of pride, . . . their churches have become corrupted; . . . they rob the poor, because of their fine sanctuaries; they rob the poor because of their fine clothing; and they persecute the meek, and the poor in heart (2 Nephi 26:20, 28:12, 13).

Joseph Smith tried to join the Methodists at Harmony, Pennsylvania, in 1828 but was rejected, reportedly because of his previous money-digging activities.<sup>27</sup> Destitute by the time he began translating the Book of Mormon plates in 1827, he had to depend on the charity of friends and his father-in-law.<sup>28</sup>

His situation was so desperate by 1830 that he sought to sell the copyright of the Book of Mormon in Canada.<sup>29</sup> The people of Palmyra said at this time that the Smiths were "without influence in the community."<sup>30</sup> Joseph Smith had not found acceptance in this middle-class Protestant community. Other equally poor early Mormons were Brigham Young, John Taylor, Lorenzo Snow, and Lyman Wight.<sup>31</sup> In an early revelation Joseph described his followers as "the weak things of the world, those who are unlearned and despised" (D&C 35:13; compare 1:19). Years later Orson Spencer said that the bulk of Mormon converts were from the working classes.<sup>32</sup> These people were not successful as Jacksonian Americans understood the term. They were among the outcasts and disregarded.

The Mormons criticized more than the middle-class churches. They said they disliked the political parties and the dissensions they caused. Mormonism came into being when political parties were being reorganized into what one historian has called the "second American party system."<sup>33</sup> The initial party system under Jefferson and Alexander Hamilton had been located along the eastern seaboard to service men of property and social status who dominated a society of social deference.<sup>34</sup> Political practices in Virginia, for example, were hardly democratic.<sup>35</sup> But all that changed for the most part after 1800, as Americans moved west by the thousands and the old order broke down. For the first time, in the mid-1830s, Americans had a truly national two-party system with universal suffrage for men, political conventions, and party newspapers in every major town to dramatize political issues and rally support for their party.<sup>36</sup> Politics in America had become democratized, but in the process much of the old style of deference to the rich, well born, and able had vanished. In its place had come a raucous, competitive, open struggle for power among diverse groups.<sup>37</sup>

In the new order of things, parties and party leaders had to cater to the mass electorate. Candidates for office were chosen not on the basis of social prestige and ability but for their vote

getting capability. New men rose to power, like Andrew Jackson who was limited in education, and Martin Van Buren, who was seen as a political manipulator who cared little for principle but a great deal for power.<sup>38</sup>

On the whole Joseph Smith and the Mormons cared little for the new style of politics or political leaders. In lamenting an undue separation between religion and politics in the nation, the editor of the *Times and Seasons* said in 1844 that in this regard "the course taken by many of our politicians is altogether culpable."<sup>39</sup> While Joseph Smith admired strong-willed Andrew Jackson,<sup>40</sup> he despised weak-willed Martin Van Buren who had "turned a deaf ear to suffering innocense" in Missouri, who had told him "if I do anything, I shall come into contact with the whole state of Missouri." Joseph said he was thus a victim of "partyism," that Van Buren was an "office-seeker . . ." and that justice and righteousness were no part of his composition.<sup>41</sup>

Still seeking redress for losses suffered in Missouri, the prophet sought possible relief from several presidential candidates in 1844, only to be told that they would make no promises not guaranteed to all citizens. Furious, Smith told Henry Clay that he was "soft to flatter rather than solid to feed the people," that he hated the "imbecility of American statesmen," and "detested the shrinkage . . . of candidates for office from pledges and responsibilities."<sup>42</sup> When John C. Calhoun replied to a similar inquiry, saying that he would seek to administer the government according to the Constitution and the laws and treat all religions alike, Joseph said that this sounded just but "who that is ambitious for greatness and power, would not have said the same thing?" Smith said that politicians should "judge a righteous judgement—law or no law." The prophet warned that the consequences of Calhoun's disregard of justice would be that "God will come out of his hiding place and vex this nation . . . with the consuming wrath of an offended God."<sup>43</sup>

The prophet wanted a government that would render absolute justice and not be subject to the processes of democracy where compromise and "vote-getting" took priority. As early as 1842 he said that "Monarchical, aristocratic, and republican forms of government, of their various kinds and grades, have in their turn been raised to dignity and prostrated in the dust. The plans of the greatest politicians, the wisest senators, and the most profound statesmen have been exploded; . . . it is not in man that walketh to direct his steps."<sup>44</sup> Significantly, he wrote in his *Views of the Powers and Policy of the Government* in 1844 that "at the age of sixty years our blooming republic began to decline under the withering touch of Martin Van Buren."<sup>45</sup> At the very apex of the Jacksonian democratic revolution Joseph Smith saw the nation beginning its downward slide.

John Taylor and the author of "Millennium" did not like the many reform associations in America either. There were in this period societies for almost endless causes—anti-slavery, women's rights, temperance, prison reform, asylums for the deaf and mute, for orphans, and others. One historian called this an age of "freedom's ferment."<sup>46</sup> What seemed to Americans to be a

means for social progress and moral reform was to the Latter-day Saints further evidence of social chaos. The best example of this is the prophet's reaction to the efforts of the American Anti-Slavery Society.

When abolitionists came to Kirtland, Ohio, in 1836, Joseph Smith spoke out strongly against them. One of his fears apparently was that the Church's missionary efforts might be undermined in the South if word got out that abolitionists had been favorably received in Kirtland. Nonetheless, fear of social discord was a controlling factor. Smith wrote in the *Messenger and Advocate* that he hoped "that no one who is authorized from this church to preach the gospel, will so far depart from the scripture as to be found stirring up strife and sedition against our brethren of the South." He warned that the abolitionists would if encouraged "set loose upon the world a community of people who might . . . overrun the country and violate the most sacred principles of human society—chastity and virtue." He cited Paul's letters to Timothy as evidence that the Saints should cooperate with slave holders, and warned that a curse had been placed on the seed of Ham.<sup>47</sup> Joseph saw the abolitionist movement as subversive.

In time Joseph softened his attitude toward abolition to some extent. He told Apostle Orson Hyde some years later that a Mormon convert from the South with a hundred slaves should bring them to Nauvoo, Illinois, set them free, and grant them equal rights. But this applied only on an individual level and said nothing about slavery in the southern states. Joseph told Judge Adams in 1842 that he would oppose giving American blacks their own government because they "would become quarrelsome." He added that he would not vote for a southerner for president for "if they could obtain sufficient power & got a religious peake against any religionists they would subdue them, compel our children to mix with their slaves."<sup>48</sup> When Smith ran for the White House in 1844 he said he favored buying the slaves, setting them free, and sending them to Mexico where "all colors are alike."<sup>49</sup> At a time when some abolitionists championed full equality for all Americans,<sup>50</sup> Joseph clung to his conservative, racially motivated views. But underlying his and his people's conservatism was fear of social conflict and impending chaos. This is made clear in an editorial in the *Messenger and Advocate*. Learning of race riots in Hartford, Philadelphia, and New York, the writer was certain that they spelled doom for America: "Let the reflecting mind once pursue the accounts of distress and afflictions, which are going the rounds, and will he not doubt, that the end is near?"<sup>51</sup>

An argument for Joseph Smith's anti-reform attitudes can be made with respect to plural marriage. The early nineteenth century was a time when women made some strides toward legal equality with men, gaining the right to hold property in their own name and to retain their children after divorce. They found opportunities for employment as mill workers, elementary school teachers, editors, and novelists, as well as doctors of medicine.<sup>52</sup> Reactions to this, however, helped to solidify what has been called the "cult of true womanhood" whose

advocates insisted that the woman's place was in the home in isolated domesticity.<sup>53</sup> By the early 1840s many women had broken this mold, demanding equal right to participate in anti-slavery meetings, which brought sharp opposition.<sup>54</sup> All of this caused non-Mormon historian Lawrence Foster to see plural marriage as a counter-move, a way of keeping women in their place.<sup>55</sup> Although we have no certain evidence that Joseph Smith reacted to women's rights movements,<sup>56</sup> we know that he organized a women's Relief Society in Nauvoo to provide social service, as well as to help keep in check any discussion of plural marriage.<sup>57</sup> If, as some have argued, the Relief Society implied a "priesthood" function for women,<sup>58</sup> it should be remembered that their activities at Nauvoo were closely supervised.

In fact, it can be persuasively argued that plural marriage actually set women back in their status in the Mormon kingdom. Within evangelical Protestantism and early Mormonism, women had equal access to salvation with men.<sup>59</sup> All could have a change of heart and gain acceptance with the Lord. But when plural marriage was first set forth in May 1843, men and women were informed that they must be sealed together in marriage by the priesthood to gain the highest degree of glory in the celestial kingdom (D&C 131). While this could be interpreted to mean equality and mutual dependence between men and women, the tone of a revelation given two months later for Emma Smith's benefit was quite different. There it was made clear that the woman must accept the principle or "be destroyed" (132:4, 54). Thus men made the choices as to whom they wanted for plural wives, whereas women could only hope they were suitable.

This subordinate status of women was plainly described by Apostle Erastus Snow in 1857, telling the sisters that they must uphold their husbands "as your Lord." Snow said, "No woman will get into the celestial kingdom except her husband receives her." He warned that if she were not worthy of her husband "somebody will receive her as a servant."<sup>60</sup> Apostle Jedediah Grant said that women had made covenants to "abide the law of that husband."<sup>61</sup> And according to a recent biography, Brigham Young considered women to be inferior beings who derived guilt from original sin. Men must rule them. For a sister, Young explained, "it is a law that a man shall rule over me; his word is my law, and I must obey him."<sup>62</sup> Young told the Relief Society that they "have no right to meddle in the affairs of the Kingdom of God . . . they can never hold the keys of the Priesthood apart from their husbands."<sup>63</sup>

Thus Mormon women after 1843 and the introduction of plural marriage became dependent children of God, whose salvation awaited the initiative of a male priesthood holder. Obviously women who were physically attractive or companionable gained advantage in their quest for salvation. Rather than being rewarded for their own works they had to await the disposition of another to achieve exaltation. In this they had lost some degree of equality in the kingdom.

Joseph Smith made it clear that one consideration in introducing plural marriage was a desire for social harmony

and order. He said in a revelation of July 1843 that all marriages not performed by qualified priesthood holders would be of no effect in the hereafter. The house of the Lord, he said, was "a house of order . . . and not a house of confusion." In the celestial kingdom one law would apply, not several (D&C 132:6, 7).

Joseph's anti-pluralism shows through here, his opposition to a conflict of laws. In these ways plural marriage was anti-democratic.

**O**BSERVING continuous discord and violence in America, the Saints were certain that greed and materialism contributed to it. Book of Mormon prophets had warned against American acquisitiveness at a time when, according to one historian, "the generation that voted for Andrew Jackson in 1828 . . . was as acquisitive as any in American history."<sup>64</sup> The Mormon scripture cautioned repeatedly that those placing acquisition above devotion to God were doomed to war and destruction.<sup>65</sup> In the Book of Mormon wealth is valued and given by the Lord to those who serve him faithfully.<sup>66</sup> Yet it must not become the primary quest, for this promotes social conflict.<sup>67</sup>

The United Order first established in Kirtland and Missouri was a way of offsetting American materialism and competition. Social harmony, cooperation, and brotherhood were sought, not individualism. Where middle class Americans wanted equality of economic opportunity for white males that all might have a chance at the good life, Mormons wanted an equality of goods so that social divisions might be eliminated. The prophet said in a revelation, "I say unto you be one; and if ye are not one ye are not mine" (D&C 38:27). Explaining the significance of this revelation, Apostle Orson Pratt later noted that this commandment "embraces all other commands. There is no law, statute, ordinance, nor blessing, but what was instituted to make the Saints one." Pratt said that an "inequality in property is the root and foundation of innumerable evils, it tends to division, and to keep asunder the social feelings." He insisted, "It is a great barrier erected by the devil to prevent that united and oneness which the Gospel requires."<sup>68</sup> Brigham Young told the Saints that "there is a feeling which has come by the fall, by transgression, in the heart of every person that his interest is individually to himself. . . . This is a mistaken idea."<sup>69</sup> But some historians have argued that at the heart of so-called Jacksonian democracy was a quest for individual and corporate economic opportunity.<sup>70</sup> In modifying individual enterprise in the United Order, the Mormons once more were critical of a main thrust of Jacksonianism.

As a result of their negative reaction to the democratizing influences in the nation, the Latter-day Saints despaired for its destiny. The Book of Mormon warned that unless Americans accepted Jesus Christ and gave themselves to his religion the nation was doomed. Elder Parley P. Pratt warned in 1838 that destruction was imminent. He said that the Book of Mormon had

set the time for the overthrow of our government and all other Gentile governments on the American continent, but the way and means of this utter destruction are clearly foretold, namely the remnant of Jacob [the American Indians] will go through among the Gentiles and tear them to pieces, like a lion among the flocks of sheep. . . . This destruction includes the utter overthrow, and desolation of our cities, Forts and Strong Holds—an entire annihilation of our race, except as embrace the Covenant, and are numbered among Israel.

Pratt confidently declared, "I state as a prophecy, that there will not be an unbelieving Gentile upon this continent in 50 years hence, and if they are not greatly scourged, and in a large measure overthrown, within five or ten years of this date, then the Book of Mormon will have proved itself false."<sup>71</sup> In Pratt's understanding the Saints were soon to have dominion in America.

Historians now know that Joseph Smith established the Council of Fifty in 1844 as the executive arm of the kingdom of God on earth.<sup>72</sup> But they disagree as to whether the kingdom was anything more than a millennial anticipation, a symbol as D. Michael Quinn called it,<sup>73</sup> or whether it was a government designed to assume power in national and world affairs.<sup>74</sup> Whatever the nature of the Council of Fifty, and I am inclined toward the latter view, it is clear that the Saints expected to see the collapse of the American government in a fifty-year span, as Parley P. Pratt indicated and Joseph Smith also affirmed.<sup>75</sup> This would necessitate the assumption of power by the elders of Israel. In 1840 Joseph Smith had a grand vision of this, saying that the Constitution would soon hang by a thread and that it would take an army of elders to save it.<sup>76</sup>

But even those writers who see the fundamental importance of the political kingdom of God in the Mormon experience tend to dismiss the sharp contrast between Mormon theocratic values and the democratic values of most Americans. Klaus Hansen argues that the theocratic themes in Mormonism were a fulfillment of the American dream, although he recognizes paradoxes.<sup>77</sup> I do not deny his contention, but it seems to me that the opposite view point bears more weight, especially in Joseph Smith's and Brigham Young's day. This understanding helps us better understand why so many Americans at the time opposed Mormonism so strongly. There was a set of assumptions among the Mormons about man and his government that ran counter to the liberalizing, democratic views sweeping the northern and border states during the first half of the nineteenth century.

To be sure, Joseph Smith believed in the American Constitution, saying that he was the "greatest advocate of the C. of U. S. there is . . . on earth." But Joseph added that "the only fault I . . . find with it is it is not broad enough to cover the ground."<sup>78</sup> Parley P. Pratt said that the Constitution provided "a land of free institutions, where such an organization [the kingdom] could be legally developed and claim constitutional protection until sufficiently matured to defend itself against the convulsions, the death struggles . . . which precede the disso-

lution of the long reign of mystical tyranny.<sup>79</sup> In the Mormon conception the American Republic was not the "last, best hope of earth" as Lincoln saw it,<sup>80</sup> but a means to an end, the establishment of Mormon theocratic rule. Joseph Smith's championing of constitutional liberties grew out of his need for a refuge, not strong democratic values. He felt no constitutional compunctions in 1838 in driving dissenters from Far West, Missouri, or in 1844 when he ordered the destruction of a printing press and compelled dissenters to flee.<sup>81</sup>

THE problem for the prophet and his people was a set of beliefs at odds with those in America who were beneficiaries of the new democratic order and confident in their capacity to promote the general welfare. Many of these men had shared in the revolt against Calvinism which had liberalized their thinking about man and his potential. Some were influenced by the so-called Scottish philosophy of common sense, which stressed human morality and rationality. They were not the common men of whom Lewis Saum writes who were pessimistic about themselves and their future,<sup>82</sup> but men who had made it and wished to preserve their status. Typical of this style of leader was Thomas C. Sharp, editor of the *Warsaw Signal*, who waged war on everything Mormon. Sharp, the son of a prosperous Methodist minister in New Jersey, went to Dickenson College in Pennsylvania for his education and then to the office of Judge Reed for eighteen months of study in the law. Like many young men in this period, he went west after passing the bar and settled at Warsaw in the fall of 1840. He tried practicing law briefly, but gave it up due to a hearing problem. He then took over the editorship of a local newspaper, *The Warsaw Message*, renaming it the *Signal* in keeping with his strong crusading inclinations. He soon became a strong voice for the Whig Party in Hancock County, championing the merits of agriculture, anti-slavery but not abolition, a national bank, and a protective tariff. Throughout his career he was an advocate of the old settlers' right to continue their control of Hancock County despite the coming of the more populous Mormons. Sharp expressed a supreme confidence in his ability and that of his non-Mormon friends to manage the affairs of the county through the medium of the two-party system, but with the strong hope that his Whigs would gain the ascendancy in the county, state, and nation.<sup>83</sup>

The Mormon view, however, remained virtually Calvinistic. One Book of Mormon prophet exclaimed: "O how foolish, and how vain, and devilish, and how quick to do iniquity, and how slow to do good, are the children of men. . . . O how great is the nothingness of the children of men; yea, even they are less than the dust of the earth" (Helaman 12:4, 7; compare 2 Nephi 9:28). In the thinking of the Nephites men must have a complete change of heart, a transformation of character, to become the sons of God. They must be born again (Mosiah 27:25). I am not sure Joseph Smith's King Follett discourse years later changed this perception much. In Mormon theology only the Saints, those who have had the change of heart and the saving

priesthood ordinances, could become like God. Perfection was reserved for Church members, not all humanity.<sup>84</sup>

Having a negative view of humanity in general, the Latter-day Saints had a pessimistic expectation of man's political destiny. In democratic America progress was inevitable. John Adams said that there was "hope for splendid improvement in human society and vast amelioration in the condition of mankind."<sup>85</sup> Middle class Americans saw their republican institutions, scientific discoveries, and increasing prosperity as signs of a bright future. John L. O'Sullivan, an editor who spoke of America as the "land of futurity," remarked in 1840 that all history demonstrated the "operation of one mighty principle . . . the great law of progress."<sup>86</sup> But Mormon expectations were directly opposed to this. The editor of the *Times and Seasons* wrote in 1841: "in looking back, over the news of the day, it is plain to discover that wickedness abounds, and men 'grow worse and worse.' . . . Men are unsafe in the hands of their neighbors—they are unsafe in the hands of strangers;—and to cap the climax, they are unsafe in their own hands."<sup>87</sup>

The American nation was seen as an instrument of progress by its people. William Gilpin said that it was America's destiny to "shed a new and resplendent glory upon mankind . . . to absolve the curse that weights down humanity and to shed its blessings around the world."<sup>88</sup> Thomas Low Nichols said of the American people: "We were taught every day and in every way that ours was the freest, the happiest, and soon to be the greatest and most powerful country in the world . . . we read it in our books, and newspapers, heard it in sermons, speeches, and orations, thanked God for it, in our prayers, and devoutly believed it always."<sup>89</sup>

But Mormons doubted the nation's destiny, despairing of its fate without the leadership of a prophet of God. This was a central point of the Book of Mormon, where its people thrived under inspired leadership but suffered war and savagery when it was lacking. As the Saints suffered persecution in Missouri and Illinois their sense of impending doom drew deeper. In petitioning Congress in 1844 to have Nauvoo declared a federal district under national protection, Joseph Smith said that if "Congress will not hear our petition and grant us protection, they will be broken up as a government, and God shall damn them, and there will be nothing left of them—not even a greese spot."<sup>90</sup>

When Smith ran for president in 1844 he and his people believed it was the only way to save the nation.<sup>91</sup> One elder said that the "Lord, the mighty God, has ordained him [Joseph] a deliverer and saviour to this generation, if they will but hear his counsel."<sup>92</sup> When Smith was killed and the Saints forced into exile the fate of the nation seemed set. Orson Pratt told the Saints in November 1845 to "be determined to get out from this evil nation next spring . . . Judgment is at the door."<sup>93</sup> The editor of the *Latter-day Saints' Millennial Star* said the Mormons were "leaving their curse upon the doomed and fated people and rulers of the United States."<sup>94</sup>

Mormon political beliefs contrasted with those of middle class Americans in other ways. Harold Hyman and William Wiecek contend that the "people's sovereignty was the constitutional mainspring of American politics" up to the Civil War, quoting as evidence the Arkansas constitution written in 1836: "All power is inherent in the people; and all free government is founded on their authority, and instituted for their peace, safety, and happiness. For the advancement of these ends, they have, at all times, an unqualified right to alter, reform or demolish their government, in such manner as they may think proper."<sup>95</sup> The idea of popular sovereignty went back at least to John Locke, and Jefferson employed it to justify his revolution against British rule.<sup>96</sup> But Joseph Smith and the Mormons repudiated this idea. The prophet said in 1842 that the Lord would be sovereign in government: "the design of Jehovah, from the commencement of the world, and his purpose now, [is] to regulate the affairs of the world in his own time; to stand as head of the universe, and take the reigns of government into his own hand."<sup>97</sup> John Taylor said bluntly in 1861: "I do not believe that the voice of the people is the voice of God. . . . We have one of the best human Governments upon the earth governed by the voice of the people, and yet we are divided, torn asunder, and confused, and appear on the eve of having two governments, and both republican in form; but which of them is governed by God?" Taylor said, "Neither of them has anything to do with the Lord."<sup>98</sup> According to Parley P. Pratt, "the church and kingdom of God is a pure THEOCRACY; that is, a government under the direct control and superintendance of the Almighty. . . . [Its leaders] were chosen by the Lord and not by the people. It is true, the people have a voice in the government of the kingdom of God but it is secondary. The power, the laws, officers do not originate with the people but with the Lord."<sup>99</sup>

Having rejected popular sovereignty, it is not surprising that the Saints hedged on the idea of majority rule. John Taylor again spoke his mind, saying that governments have "generally been established and maintained by force of arms—by power. Thus many submit to the few, and the majority have had very little to say in the matter." For Taylor, "the proper mode of government is this—God first speaks, and then the people have their action. It is for them to say whether they will have his dictation or not."<sup>100</sup> But the Saints' opportunity to vote came only periodically, and consisted of whether or not to sustain Church leaders. Their vote was not often taken into consideration on specific issues.<sup>101</sup> Joseph told a city council in Nauvoo in 1844 that "the people's voice should be heard, when their voice was just," but that when it was not "it was no longer democratic." He said that "if the minority's views are more just than Aristocracy should be the governing principle."<sup>102</sup> For the most part, this meant that Joseph himself would decide what was just. He told the Saints in Kirtland that "he was authorized by God Almighty to establish his Kingdom—that he was God's prophet . . . and that he could do whatever he should choose to do, therefore the Church had NO RIGHT TO CALL INTO

QUESTION anything he did . . . he was responsible to God Almighty alone."<sup>103</sup>

In establishing his city of refuge on the Mississippi, Joseph Smith, true to his anti-pluralistic and anti-democratic inclinations, concentrated political, judicial, and military power into his own hands, serving as political boss, mayor, chief judge, and general of the Nauvoo Legion.<sup>104</sup> He sought power this way to offset the disintegrating forces he feared were at work in America and to provide his people their refuge. At Nauvoo no distinction was drawn between secular and religious or civil and ecclesiastical, distinctions crucial to the separation of powers under the Constitution. In politics Joseph encouraged the Saints to vote en bloc so that they might have the balance of power.<sup>105</sup> When Illinois governor Thomas Ford urged him to refrain from "political electioneering" the prophet said he had always done so.<sup>106</sup> Yet within a month he told the Saints that a man who has power should use it and that from hence forth he would use his.<sup>107</sup> When he ran for the White House he seemed to hope that he might gain a balance of power nationally, that he might encourage favorable rulings for the Saints or even gain the presidency.<sup>108</sup>

In consolidating power as he did, Joseph provoked the fear and hatred of non-Mormons in the county, and then the state. Ford said that when Joseph was killed the people deplored the way it was done but not the loss of the Mormon leader.<sup>109</sup> This tragedy came about because the citizens believed in the separation of powers and opposed ecclesiastical domination. They saw Joseph Smith as a menace to their liberty.<sup>110</sup>

WITH the death of the prophet the Saints marked time in Illinois, knowing that they must soon flee into the wilderness. They saw this as prophetic and believed that the time must soon come when they would have dominion over their own nation while the American nation went to ruin. Apostle Heber C. Kimball said, "The day is not far distant when you will see us as free as the air we breathe, and we will be ruled by those men whom God Almighty appoints."<sup>111</sup> At that time the Mormons' anti-democratic revolution would be complete and the Lord and his chosen leaders would have sovereignty.

When the Saints in 1861 saw that the American nation was on the brink of civil war and dissolution they were convinced that their criticism of democracy and democratic values had been right. John Taylor spoke most plainly as to their true feelings. He said there is a "little difference between our principles . . . and what are called democratic principles. Democracy governs by the people alone; . . . where the people are pure and living under the influence of correct principles, and we are seeking to do right, it is one of the best governments on the earth. But where the people are wicked and corrupt, that alters the case materially."

The Saints, of course, did not believe that the American people were living under correct principles, for only the prophet taught these and the Americans had rejected him. Nor did they believe that the American people sought to do right.

Mormon experience in Missouri and Illinois, and with officials of the national government, proved the contrary. Taylor's conclusion seemed undeniable: "we do not believe that any people are capable of governing themselves."<sup>112</sup>

In efforts to secure their survival, the Latter-day Saints were forced to make fundamental changes at the end of the nineteenth century in accommodating American pluralism and democracy. They had to surrender much of their unique theocratic kingdom and fit into American pluralism as one of many religious denominations. They had to abandon their exclusive political party and their quest for political domination, dividing into two parties so that the weight of their collective vote would not be so threatening. They faced relentless pressure from the national government and had run out of the space that had made their social and political experimentations possible. ☞

## NOTES

1. Gordon S. Wood, "Evangelical America and Early Mormonism," *New York History* 61 (Oct. 1980): 359-86.
2. This point is developed more thoroughly in my *Quest for Refuge: The Mormon Flight from American Pluralism* (Salt Lake City: Signature Books, 1989).
3. Lee Benson, *The Concept of Jacksonian Democracy* (New York: Atheneum Press, 1961), 11-14, 336.
4. This is part of Lincoln's definition in the Gettysburg address.
5. Kenneth H. Winn, *Exiles in a Land of Liberty: Mormons in America, 1830-1846* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1989), 18-39. But he also sees it as a reaction to Jacksonian democracy, a point he does not emphasize.
6. George W. Robinson, "Scriptory Book," March 1838, in Scott H. Faulring, ed., *An American Prophet's Record: The Diaries and Journals of Joseph Smith* (Salt Lake City: Signature Books and Smith Research Associates, 1987), 160.
7. Alma "selected" Nephiah, and Pahoran was "appointed" to fill the seat of his father. His son, Pahoran, was "appointed by the voice of the people." See Helaman 1:5. Lachoneus, the last judge, did "fill the seat of his father" (3 Nephi 6:19). Perhaps in making use of the "voice of the people" the Nephites did no more than have them sustain officers appointed by those in authority. There are far too many sons succeeding fathers to support the idea that they were elected.
8. See the story of Korihor, an "anti-Christ," whose killing was approved by Alma (Alma 30:6-60).
9. The entire history of the Nephites demonstrates this point, although having righteous leaders may not even be enough to offset the wickedness of the people. But the wicked never thrive.
10. Mosiah began the era of the Judges, in 91 B.C. It ended in A.D. 29 with the murder of the chief judge. See Mosiah 29:42, and 3 Nephi 6:19, 7:1, 9-10.
11. Winn, 23.
12. Latter Day Saints' Messenger and Advocate Dec. 1834, 39.
13. *Times and Seasons* 4 (15 March 1843): 137.
14. De Tocqueville said that "among democratic nations . . . all the citizens are independent and feeble; they can do hardly anything by themselves . . . they all, therefore, become powerless if they do not learn voluntarily to help one another. . . if they never acquired the habit of forming associations in ordinary life, civilization itself would be endangered." *Democracy in America* (New York: Vintage Books, 1955), 114-115.
15. Joseph Smith, *History of the Church* 1:3-4.
16. Joseph Smith's letter to John Wentworth of the *Chicago Democrat* appears in *Times and Seasons* 3 (March 1842): 706.
17. Dumas Malone details Jefferson's fight and his view in *Jefferson the Virginian* (Boston: Little, Brown and Company, 1948), 274-80.
18. Winthrop S. Hudson, *Religion in America* (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1981), 102-106, details some of the conflict in reaching this settlement.
19. Hudson, 105.
20. Robert Baird, *Religion in America* (New York, 1845), 288.
21. Said to me frequently by evangelical Protestants when I was a missionary in the midwest and Rocky Mountain states, 1948-50.
22. Whitney R. Cross details the impact of the Second Great Awakening on western New York in his *Burned-Over District: The Social and Intellectual History of Enthusiastic Religion in Western New York, 1800-1850* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1950).
23. Barton W. Stone, a Campbellite, describes the great pressure placed upon him during the revivals and how he knew that if he were converted it would force him out of the society of his friends and family. See William Garrett West, *Barton W. Stone: Early American Advocate of Christian Unity* (Nashville: The Disciples of Christ Historical Society, 1954), 8. Compare Lucy Mack Smith's lament that if she joined no church "all religious people will say I am of the world, and if I join one of the different denominations, all the rest will say I am in error."

- Preston Nibley, ed., *History of Joseph Smith by His Mother* (Salt Lake City: Bookcraft, 1954), 31.
24. Alexander Neibaur Journal, n.p. n.d., LDS church archives.
25. Baptism, ordination to the priesthood for males, and temple ordinances for men and women were the prescribed road to salvation and exaltation.
26. See "Biographical Sketch of George Albert Smith," *Latter-day Saints' Millennial Star* 27 (July 1865): 407; "History of Willard Richards," *Millennial Star* 27 (Feb. 1865): 118-19; Parley P. Pratt, *Autobiography of Parley Parker Pratt* (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book Company, 1961), 19; Paul Hokanson, "Lewis Warren Shurtliff: A Great Man in Israel," M.A. thesis, Brigham Young University, 1979, 8-11; and I. Woodbridge Riley, *The Founder of Mormonism* (New York: Dodd, Mead, 1902), 47.
27. Two of Emma Smith's cousins so reported in the *Ambony Journal*, 30 April, 11 June 1879.
28. Joseph Knight recalled the financial help he gave to Joseph. See "Reminiscences of Joseph Knight," LDS church archives. Compare Linda King Newell and Valeen Tippetts Avery, *Mormon Enigma: Emma Hale Smith* (New York: Doubleday & Company, 1984), 22, 26, 28.
29. Hiram Page recalled this in a letter to "Brother William" on 2 Feb. 1848. His letters are in the archives of the Reorganized Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints at Independence, Missouri. Compare David Whitmer's similar recollection in *An Address to All Believers in Christ* (1887), 30.
30. E. D. Howe, *Mormonism Unveiled* (Painesville, OH, 1834), 261-62.
31. See Newell G. Bringham, *Brigham Young and the Expanding American Frontier* (Boston: Little, Brown and Company, 1986), 17-18; Brigham H. Roberts, *The Life of John Taylor* (Salt Lake: Bookcraft, 1963), 23; Eliza R. Snow, *Biography and Family Record of Lorenzo Snow* (Salt Lake: Deseret News Company, 1884), 2; "History of Lyman Wight," *Millennial Star* 27 (22 July 1865): 455.
32. Orson Spencer, *Letters Exhibiting the Most Prominent Doctrines of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints* (Salt Lake City: Deseret News Co., 1889), 38.
33. Richard P. McCormick, *The Second American Party System* (New York: W.W. Norton & Company, 1966).
34. See Phys Isaac, *The Transformation of Virginia, 1740-1790*. (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1982), 64, 76-78, 109-10, 125, 133.
35. Phys Isaac, 110-13, for a vivid description of the deferential management of voting for the House of Burgesses in Virginia.
36. Robert V. Remini, *The Revolutionary Age of Andrew Jackson* (New York: Harper & Row, Publishers, 1976), for the democratic style of politics.
37. Remini, 49-52.
38. Remini, 38, for an assessment of Van Buren; and the same author's *Andrew Jackson and the Course of American Empire* (New York: Harper & Row, Publishers, 1977), 28-29, for Jackson's limited education.
39. *Times and Seasons* 5 (15 March 1844): 470.
40. Joseph Smith, *Views of the Powers and Policy of the Government* (Nauvoo, 1844), 32. Joseph said that Jackson's administration was the "acme of American glory, liberty and prosperity."
41. *History of the Church* 4:40, 80. Joseph said that under Van Buren "thirst for power, pride, corruption, party spirit, faction, patronage. . . and spiritual wickedness in high places, struck hands, and revelled in midnight splendor." See *Views of the Powers*, 32-33.
42. *Correspondence Between Gen. Joseph Smith and the Hon. H. Clay*.
43. *Correspondence Between Gen. Joseph Smith and the Hon. H. Clay*.
44. *Times and Seasons* 3 (15 July 1842): 856.
45. *Views of the Powers*, 32. He added further on "no honest man can doubt for a moment, but the glory of American liberty is on the wane" (33).
46. Alice Felt Tyler, *Freedom's Ferment: Phases of American Social History of 1860* (Minneapolis, 1944).
47. *Messenger and Advocate*, April 1836, 299-301.
48. "Joseph Smith's Journal Kept by Willard Richards," 30 Dec. 1842, in Faulring, 260.
49. Andrew Ehat and Lyndon Cook, eds., *The Words of Joseph Smith* (Provo, UT: Religious Studies Center, Brigham Young University, 1980), 326.
50. See Eileen Kraditor, *Means and Ends in American Abolitionism* (New York: Vintage Books, 1967), 22, 27, 31, for the aims of the more radical abolitionists.
51. *Messenger and Advocate*, July 1835, 149.
52. Ronald G. Walters, *American Reformers* (New York: Hill & Wang, 1978), reviews the general trends in women's quest for equal status with men. Compare Carl N. Degler, *At Odds: Women and Family in America from the Revolution to the Present* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1870), who deals with the early nineteenth century.
53. Barbara Welter, "The Cult of True Womanhood," *American Quarterly* 18 (1966): 217-40.
54. Kraditor, 39-77.
55. Lawrence Foster, *Religion and Sexuality* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1981), 139, 230.
56. Foster believes that the pamphlet written by Udny Hay Jacob, *The Peace Maker*, published at Nauvoo, represented Mormon and perhaps Joseph Smith's views. If so the pamphlet expressed fear of divorce and woman's "unnatural usurpation of power in the family." See Foster, 175-76. Whether this work did represent Joseph Smith's views, however, is a matter of conjecture.
57. Newell and Avery, 106-18.
58. Ian Barber, "The Ecclesiastical Position of Women in Two Mormon Trajectories," *Journal of Mormon History* 14 (1988): 63-80.
59. Some of the earliest converts were women. See *History of the Church* 1:81, 86, 87.
60. *Journal of Discourses* 5:291.
61. *Journal of Discourses* 4:128.
62. Bringham, 192.
63. *Seventies' Record*, 9 March 1845, LDS church archives.
64. Marvin Meyers, *The Jacksonian Persuasion* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 1960), viii.

65. 2 Nephi 2:9 serves as a good example: "But woe unto the rich, who are rich as to the things of the world. For because they are rich, they despise the poor, and their hearts are upon their treasures; wherefore their treasure is their God. And behold, their treasure shall perish with them also."

66. Alma 1:29 informs us, "And now, because of the steadiness of the church they began to be exceeding rich, having abundance . . . of gold, and silver, and precious things." Jacob 2:18 enjoined "before ye seek for riches, seek ye for the kingdom of God."

67. The Nephites after Jesus Christ's visit prospered with righteousness, but then they were lifted up in pride and began wearing costly apparel and would not share with the poor, dividing into classes. At that point they began to do "all manner of wickedness." See 4 Nephi 1:7, 18, 12, 26-27.

68. "The Equality and Oneness of the Saints," *The Seer*, July 1854, 289.

69. *Journal of Discourses* 4:27.

70. Meyers, 12, 15.

71. Parley P. Pratt, *Mormonism Unveiled* (1838), 15.

72. Klaus Hansen, *Quest for Empire* (East Lansing: Michigan State University Press, 1967).

73. D. Michael Quinn, "The Council of Fifty and Its Members, 1844 to 1945," *Brigham Young University Studies* 20 (Winter 1980): 163-93.

74. This is Hansen's view in *Quest for Empire*.

75. Ehat and Cook, 179-81. Joseph said, "I prophecy in the name of the Lord God—& let it be written, that the Son of Man will not come in the heavens till I am 85 years old 48 years hence or about 1890."

76. Dean Jesse, "Joseph Smith's July 19, 1840 Discourse," *Brigham Young University Studies* 19 (Spring 1979): 392-94. Parley Pratt also stressed the militaristic means of saving the Constitution as reported by his brother Orson, in a letter to George A. Smith, 21 Jan. 1841, LDS church archives.

77. Hansen, 22-24. This chapter is called "Mormonism and the American Dream."

78. Ehat and Cook, 256.

79. Parley P. Pratt, *Key to the Science of Theology* (Liverpool, 1855), 76.

80. Abraham Lincoln's Annual Message to Congress, 1 Dec. 1862.

81. Marvin Hill, *Quest for Refuge: The Mormon Flight from American Pluralism* (Salt Lake City: Signature Books, 1989), 77, 145.

82. Hudson, 160, 163, 167-68, 176-66, and 180 details the revolt against Calvinism in America, while Russel Nye in *The Cultural Life of the New Nation*, (New York: Harper & Row, 1960), 29-37, reviews American faith in human perfectibility and the impact of the Scottish philosophy. Lewis O. Saum in *The Popular Mood of Pre-Civil War America*, (Westport, Connecticut: Greenwood Press, 1980), ix-26, argues that the "common man" in this period was much more pessimistic than some have supposed. Nonetheless, he admits that optimism prevailed in "higher circles," 26. While it would be an overstatement in pluralistic America to call the Mormons un-American, Grant Underwood surely exaggerates the degree to which they were typically American. He comes close to saying that they had no distinctive identity (see his "New England Origins of Mormons Revisited" in *Journal of Mormon History* 15 (1989): 15-25).

83. See Roger D. Launius, "Anti-Mormonism in Illinois: Thomas C. Sharp's Unfinished History of the Mormon War, 1845," *Journal of Mormon History* 15 (1989): 27-46, but especially p. 28 for his background on Sharp. For Sharp's political views and general confidence in his party, people, and government see *Warsaw Signal*, 12 May 1841; 19 May 1841, 4; and 25 August 1841, 4, where he laments the evils of luxury during an economic slump but still praises the country as "boundless in resources," and the "means of wealth and independence."

84. Joseph Smith addressed his discourse to the Saints at Nauvoo. Thus when he told them "you have got to learn how to make yourselves god" he was not talking about mankind in general. True, he said that "intelligence exists upon a self-existent principle no creation about it. All mind & spirit God ever sent into the world are susceptible of enlargement," and this would imply progress is possible for all. Nonetheless, he never said explicitly that every man would progress. The tone of the book of Mormon suggests to the contrary. Further, Grant Underwood has shown that despite some liberalizing in the Prophet's thought on salvation at the end of his life, the Saints themselves retained the old beliefs that none but Mormons would be saved. The "Vision" of three degrees of glory given in 1832 had no effect. (See Underwood "Saved or Damned: tracing a Persistent Protestantism in Early Mormon Thought," *BYU Studies* 25 (Summer 1985): 85-103). Several versions of the King Follett sermon appear in Ehat and Cook, 340-62.

85. Quoted by Russel Blaine Nye, *Society and Culture in America, 1830-1860* (New York: Harper Torchbooks, 1974), 26.

86. Nye, 27.

87. *Times and Seasons* 2 (1 Feb. 1841): 303.

88. Nye, *Society and Culture*, 17.

89. Nye, 3.

90. *Millennial Star* 22 (21 July 1860): 455. This is the prophet's history.

91. *History of the Church* 6:188.

92. *Times and Seasons* 5 (1 June 1844): 557.

93. "Farewell Message of Orson Pratt," *Times and Seasons* 6 (1 Dec. 1845): 1043.

94. *Millennial Star* 6 (1 Dec. 1845): 200.

95. Harold M. Hyman and William M. Wiecek, *Equal Justice Under Law: Constitutional Development, 1835-1875* (New York: Harper and Row, 1982), 2.

96. Malone, 227.

97. *Times and Seasons* 3 (15 July 1842): 856.

98. *Journal of Discourses* 9:9.

99. *Millennial Star* 5 (March 1845): 150.

100. *Journal of Discourses* 9:10.

101. A major exception was the choosing of Brigham Young as Joseph Smith's successor. Young acknowledged that he was the people's choice and that his authority came from them. See *Quest for Refuge*, 158.

102. Joseph Smith's Ms. History, Book E1, p. 1917, LDS church archives.

103. This quote comes from Benjamin Winchester in Charles Woodward, "The First Half Century of Mormonism," 195. The original collection of letters and recollections is found in the New York Public Library.

104. Hill, *Quest for Refuge*, 111, 121, 125.

105. Robert B. Flanders, *Nauvoo: Kingdom on the Mississippi* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1964), 240.

106. *History of the Church* 5:232.

107. *History of the Church* 5:286.

108. Hill, *Quest for Refuge*, 252-59.

109. *History of the Church* 7:128.

110. Hill, *Quest for Refuge*, 121, 133-34; compare Winn, 219.

111. *Journal of Discourses* 9:7.

112. *Journal of Discourses* 9:9.

## BREATHINGS

Willene has the bed, Elise the couch.  
It's Beth's week to pretend  
the floormat's soft. After lights out,  
Beth begins. Willene's said "bullshit"  
three times that day. Wouldn't "untruth"  
do? Her voice quavers the way it does  
when she's taking hold. Willene says this word

lacks synonym. It's the province of women  
and no one else . . . except Blacks  
or Chicanos or Indians. Beth and Elise sigh,  
supposing she's been to Womanbooks again.  
Maybe she could get a regular job?

Raising seven children: that's bullshit.  
Or taking a job when you want to be home.  
Willene's on a roll, says the man-made  
piles, shovelled high and fly infested,  
are easy to see. The real trick with bullshit  
is skirting the flat, wet splats hidden  
in deep grass by women who are afraid.  
Count on it, sisters, when someone says,  
"As your priesthood advisor, I counsel,"  
you better check your knees; you're in it  
at least that much, maybe up to your. . ."  
Beth gasps.

Willene thinks more about bullshit. About  
the midnight whores walking outside. About  
her mother who can't figure the taxes if dad  
dies first. No one speaks, so she tries one  
more: taking upon yourself the name of Family  
Home Evening, that's real bullshit.

But no one talks back. And maybe having the bed  
and the say is bullshit, too. The even breathings  
of these sisters make the small, hot room safe  
from sirens, from screams, from glass shattering  
each New York night. It takes such breathing  
before women touch one another. It takes  
considerable bullshit before they are sanctified.

—LORETTA RANDALL SHARP