

## Guest Editor's Prologue

Truman G. Madsen\*

With this issue of *BYU Studies*, the Institute of Mormon Studies completes its reworking of the Missouri Period of Church History and opens up the Nauvoo Era which, we project, will keep us occupied for at least four years.

Once again, Stanley L. Kimball has probed little-known and out-of-the-way sources and resources of Missouri manuscripts. The result is a clarifying of dates and places of the prelude and postlude of the period from 1831-1841. One of his colorful "finds" is in the "Hubble Family" papers which record a late interview (1886) with David Whitmer, a singular glimpse of this important Mormon figure as he looked back.

Leland H. Gentry, confronted with the thorny and controversial issues of the "Danites," presents a coherent account showing how, in an atmosphere of pillage, dissent, and polarization, such an "order" could arise. While his effort to "shave the beard" of fiction and folklore from the factual may not be the last word, it is, at least, one that future interpreters cannot ignore.

Richard L. Anderson and Peter Crawley have combined talents in their "The Political and Social Realities of Zion's Camp." This lengthy and perilous journey has seemed, even to some Mormon interpreters, a bit quixotic and the explanations inadequate. This article outlines the precipitating conditions in Missouri. The promises of Governor Dunklin, it turns out, legitimized the expedition not, as has been said, to initiate war, but to help protect Mormon landowners after the State had reestablished the Missouri Saints on their lands. The executive promises were retracted in the threat of civil war, making the dissolution of the camp the only law abiding action left.

Toward geographic precision on the sites and buildings of

---

\*Dr. Madsen, professor of philosophy, holds the Richard L. Evans Chair of Christian Understanding at Brigham Young University. He is also the Director of the Institute of Mormon Studies.

significant Mormon reference, Max H. Parkin shows that while the location of the Independence Courthouse referred to by the Prophet is the same, the structure is not, even though historians often say it is.

As a bonus in this issue, we print photographic copies of two rare documents of the Missouri Period. The first, *The Evening and the Morning Star. Extra 1834*, is presently known only in two copies which have been found in the last three years. In addition to its being very rare, this imprint also forms the first comprehensive account of the expulsion of the Saints from Jackson County, probably written by Parley P. Pratt.

The second, *The Fourth of July Oration* by Sidney Rigdon, has been known for a long time, but has been generally inaccessible to the larger group of LDS scholars. It followed Rigdon's "Salt Sermon" by seventeen days, and the two are often cited as the beginning of the end of Mormonism in Missouri. No copy of the "Salt Sermon" has been found, whereas the Oration was printed and circulated in 1838.

As the Institute's project on Mormon origins moves into its seventh year, one wonders how significant the labor has been and what its long-standing effects may be. Three developments have emerged which, we feel, are a partial answer.

First, the data-search has provided and will continue to provide grist for the projected Sesqui-Centennial History of the Church. Leonard Arrington and his allies continue to encourage and participate in the research. Likewise we will support both individual scholars and cooperative ventures that further this effort.

Second, as the library collections continue to build in centers for the study of American religions, experts from a variety of disciplines are triggered in interest and find guidance to original sources and to the bibliographic and historiographic materials that are now accumulating from this joint effort of the Institute and *BYU Studies*. Not the least gratifying are the inquiries from the likes of Reformation historian, John Dillenberger, and American religion expert, Timothy Smith.

Third, the extension of the "context," the recovery of non-Mormon sources and heretofore ignored or "unknown" documents, helps in the vital but precarious reconstruction of influences in the unfolding drama of American Mormon history.

An example of a significant document only recently "discovered" is an unrecorded revelation to W. W. Phelps concern-

ing the purchase of paper for the publication of the Book of Commandments and the translation of the New Testament. The handwriting of the document is Sidney Rigdon's and the revelation also bears a penciled note as to date and place—20 March 1832 at Hyrum [Ohio]—in an unknown hand. Sidney Rigdon had written on the reverse side, "Revelation as to paper for Phelps, 1832."

This document was one of those contributed to the Harold B. Lee Library at Brigham Young University by the Whitney-Groo family.

First Shall we procure the paper required of our bretheren in this letter and carry it with us or not and if we do what money shall we use for that purpose It is expedient saith the Lord unto you that the paper shall be purchased for the printing of the book of the Lords commandments and it must needs be that you take it with for it is not expedient that my servant Martin should as yet go up unto the land of Zion let the purchase be made by the Bishop of [if] it must needs be by hire let whatsoever is done be done in the name of the Lord

Second shall we finish the translation of the New Testament before we go to Zion or wait till we return

It is expedient saith the Lord that there be no delays and this saith the Lord for the greatest good and benefit of the church Wherefore omit the translation for the present time  
20 March 1832 at Hyrum