

ensnared, and especially afraid to meet Joseph Smith, lest he should want their money. After remaining a short time here, they went back to Warsaw, where some of the greatest enemies reside, and, I am sorry to say, have joined in the general clamour and business of circulating evil reports, some of which I, MYSELF, KNOW POSITIVELY TO BE FALSE.

For me to write any thing concerning the character of president Joseph Smith would be superfluous. All evil reports concerning him I treat with utter contempt; but because I esteem you highly as a friend and brother, I will say a few words on this subject. Joseph Smith is not the "treasurer for all the Saints," and has no more to do with their money than you or me; every man just does what he pleases with his money, and neither Joseph, nor any one of the officers, ever attempt to control any one, or their property either.

The church have appointed Joseph Smith trustee, in trust for the church, and as such, upon him devolves the important duties of buying lands, that the Saints may have somewhere to gather together, and he is responsible for the payment for these lands. How can he do this without means? If those who have money will not assist by purchasing lands from Joseph Smith, and paying him money for it, how is the church to be built up, and what is to become of the thousands of poor who are continually pouring in from all quarters?

With regard to J. Smith getting drunk, I will say that I am now acting as clerk for him, and at his office daily, and have been since February 10th, and I know he is as much opposed to the use of intoxicating drinks as any man need be.—I have never seen him drunk, nor have I ever heard any man who has seen him drunk since we came here. I believe he does not take intoxicating drink of any kind: our city is conducted wholly upon temperance principles. As to his using snuff and tobacco, I KNOW he does no such thing. To conclude, I will add that, the more I am with him, the more I love him; the more I know of him, and am sorry that people should give heed to evil reports concerning him, when we all know the great service he has rendered the church.

COLONEL THOMAS L. KANE ON MORMON POLITICS

J. Keith Melville

When the Thirty-first Congress met in December of 1849, a major item to be considered was the organization of ter-

ritorial or state governments for the area acquired from Mexico by the Treaty of Guadalupe-Hidalgo (1848). Mexican settlements of long standing in present-day New Mexico and California were thereafter under the jurisdiction of the United States. The Gold Rush of '49 brought a large influx of United States citizens into California, who immediately established a government west of the Sierra Nevada Mountains and sought admittance into the Union as a state.

The Mormons, who settled in the Great Basin portion of Upper California, at first met the civic needs of their society with a theocratic government. A number of problems arose, however, which prompted a move to organize a regular civil government. On January 6, 1849, the Council of Fifty, the legislative body of the theocracy, selected John M. Bernhisel as a lobbyist to go to Washington, D.C., to petition Congress for a territorial government. Later in the spring, a civil government called the "State of Deseret" was organized, and on July 5, 1849, the General Assembly elected Almon W. Babbitt as the delegate to Congress. The prime objective of both men was to get statehood for Deseret.

Deseret statehood, however, was imperiled by the national controversy over slavery; a variety of charges, including disloyalty and sedition, leveled against the Mormons by their opponents, among which was a petition to President Zachary Taylor from William Smith, the Prophet's brother; and rumors prompted by polygamy that the Mormons were involved in immorality, licentiousness, and debauchery.

The Compromise of 1850 admitted the State of California into the Union as a free state, but included only an "Act to establish a Territorial Government for Utah." Why? There were many contributing factors, but Colonel Thomas L. Kane believed the "improper conduct" of the representative of Deseret hurt the cause of Deseret statehood. Even though Kane and Babbitt were both Democrats, the colonel was unimpressed with the delegate from Deseret. Conversely, he was highly pleased with the "modest good sense and careful purpose to do right" of Dr. Bernhisel, who conducted his personal and public affairs with "upright deportment and gentlemanly demeanor. . . ."¹

¹Letter of Thomas L. Kane to the Mormon leaders, September 24, 1850, as found in the "Journal History of the Church" in the Church Historian's Office.

In his letter of September 24, 1850, to the leaders of the Church, Kane offered some sage advice on Mormon political activities in that day:

I have just returned from Washington, where I was called . . . to use my influence with Mr. Fillmore in favor of the nominations for Utah. . . . Until Deseret is admitted into the Union, I would not be thought exacting as to the qualification of her Representative, but he should at least be of correct deportment, discreet, and of good report, that those who point to him and say, "there goes a Mormon," may find marked their approval of his religion. The Delegate, as sort of ambassador, is commonly taken as the specimen man of his constituency; if he cannot do good, if he is either ashamed of his religion, or a shame to it, he can do much harm. In politics, too, . . . he should at all events be a man whose instincts will teach him to be a trusty supporter of his single party and nice in his choice of the associates that belong to it. Otherwise, he will have personal influence with neither party, and gain not strength but only dependency from the relations he cultivates. . . .

Mormon elders who seek responsible positions of public trust and Mormon voters who want their culture as well as their political needs well represented should find these words of Thomas L. Kane not only historically interesting but currently appropriate.

ELIZA R. SNOW'S "SKETCH OF MY LIFE":
REMINISCENCES OF ONE OF JOSEPH SMITH'S
PLURAL WIVES

Spencer J. Palmer

The subject of plural marriage among the Mormons may seem like an exotic one to historians, but, when correctly understood, it is also a topic that can help one evaluate the peculiar nature of the Mormon faith as well as the deep sensitivity of many of its adherents. During the 1880s Hubert Howe Bancroft spent considerable time in Utah, gathering material for his important *History of Utah* and for the vital collection of Mormon documents which is now located in the Bancroft Library at Berkeley, California. One of the people he became acquainted with was Eliza R. Snow, who had once