

The Historians Corner

JOHN HYDE, JUNIOR—AN EARLIER VIEW

Edward L. Hart

John Hyde, Jr., is familiar to most students of Mormon history as one of the most famous apostate writers of the early Utah period. Having joined the Church in England, he spent a short time on a mission to France and the Channel Islands. After migrating to Utah, he was called on a mission to the Sandwich Islands during the Conference of April 1856 and set out on his journey. On the way, he decided to renounce Mormonism and to work against the Church in the Islands and in California. He was the author of an anti-Mormon book in which he reports that he was excommunicated by motion of Heber C. Kimball in Salt Lake City on 11 January 1857.¹

Hyde's career in opposition to the Church is well known, but his activities of an earlier date, while still a member, are less known, as is the fact that he had been in severe difficulties with the Church even before going to Utah. It is with this earlier period that I shall deal here. Most of this new information comes from James H. Hart's journals, seven of which were recently deposited in the Harold B. Lee Library at Brigham Young University.

The careers of Hyde and Hart come together in the journals for the first time in the entry for 3 June 1851. On that date the Channel Islands Mission was transferred from the British to the French Mission, as the Islands were considered "a convenient place from which to obtain and send forth Elders who were somewhat familiar with the language and manners of the French nation."² Elder John Taylor (a member of the Council of Twelve Apostles) and Elder Curtis E. Bolton had earlier been set apart in Salt Lake City to open the French Mission. Hart wrote the following in his

Edward L. Hart is professor of English at Brigham Young University.

¹John H. Hyde, Jr., *Mormonism: Its Leaders and Designs* (New York: W. P. Fetridge, 1857), pp. 24-26.

²*Millennial Star* 13(15 July 1851):218.

journal: "On Thursday 5th met at Bro. Bray's with Elders [John] Taylor, [John] Pack, [Curtis E.] Bolton, MacNaughton, and [Philip] De la Mare; rec^d an appointment by a vote of the above Council—with Bro. Hyde Jun^r—to join the French Mission."

James H. Hart had been engaged in missionary activities in England since his conversion in 1849. After the London conference he returned to Birmingham to finish up his activities there and proceeded to Jersey, where he arrived 21 June and met in council in the evening with John Taylor, John Hyde, Arthur Stayner, and Philip de la Mare. From there the missionaries scattered to their various assignments, and we do not hear of Hyde again until the end of December 1851.

The time between the opening of the French Mission and the end of 1851 was a period of great turmoil in France. The *coup d'état* of Louis Napoleon took place on 2 December 1851. James H. Hart, who had proselyted for some time in Jersey and had then gone on to Havre as branch president, was summoned by Bolton to a conference in Paris by means of a letter received on 18 December. The Paris conference was held in secret (because of political turbulence) on 20 December, at which time Curtis E. Bolton was made president of the Mission, with Louis A. Bertrand and James H. Hart as his counselors. The day following the conference Taylor and Hart left for Jersey, again with great secrecy. It was later learned that orders had gone to the police to apprehend John Taylor and take him back to Paris for questioning regarding his writings in some pamphlets and in a paper he had been editing.³

After a delay at Portbail, however, Taylor and Hart secured passage to Jersey and a reunion with the Saints there, including Hyde. This reunion may be better told in the words of James H. Hart.⁴

We found John Hyde, Jun., on the Island, but not in the happiest mood. The Channel Islands conference had been held, he was present on the occasion, but the presidency had failed to appreciate his merits and make him president, but had appointed the writer to fill that position. He clung to President Taylor very tenaciously during his stay on the island and endeavored to persuade him to appoint him on some well-defined mission; but being told that he would labor under the presidency of the writer, who would direct him in his labors, he felt wounded. He was appointed soon after to labor in Havre. . . .

³The *Étoile du Deseret* had been published in Paris since May 1851 and it was continued until April 1852.

⁴James H. Hart, "Early Reminiscences," *Juvenile Instructor* 18(1 March 1883): 77; 18(15 March 1883):93-94.

After the departure of John Taylor, James H. Hart continued his missionary work in the Channel Islands and spent five weeks proselyting across the peninsula of Brittany, returning to Jersey on 22 July 1852 in time for a conference with Bolton, Stenhouse, and others and the celebration of the Twenty-fourth of July with a procession of carriages around the Island of Jersey. All had been going well with the Mission, he was told. "I felt glad to hear these things," he wrote in his journal, "particularly as his [Bolton's] mind had been perturbed or prejudiced against us by conversation and letters from Bro. John Hyde, Jun., the first intimation of which I rec^d in a letter from Bro. Bolton dated Paris, June 25th, '52." James H. Hart then copied into his journal the following extract from Bolton's letter:

I rec^d a letter from Bro. Hyde Jun. some weeks since (2 or 3) stating that the work in the Jersey Conference was not in the best condition possible. This grieves my soul, for I love every creature that dwells upon the earth and wish they would all do right and be saved; and so does God, and it increases my grief when I hear that those that have come out from the world and made a solemn covenant with the Lord to quit their evil ways and live unto God in righteousness should forget that sacred covenant and for some foolish, vain, momentary pleasures sell themselves, soul and body, to the Devil to become his servants & handmaids. I do wish from the very bottom of my soul that it was possible for me to come among them. I feel as though I could have power to stay the torrent of sin that is sweeping away some of the poor souls whose salvation would be precious to them; but I cannot imagine how I can possibly do so for awhile. I have been for some time negotiating and urging upon [the French] Gov^t my right, as an American citizen, to hold public meetings, and I do not feel to leave that unfinished; otherwise, I would propose to change places with you for a month, which I know would prove a great blessing to the Saints here. They really need some one to pull their ears a little, and I have not the time to do it.

Continuing in his journal, still under the date of 26 July 1852, Hart reacted to Bolton's letter.

The above caused me considerable surprise, as also my Counselors Francis Kerby & Richard Treseder, two most worthy and excellent men. It not only excited surprise but indignation. We felt ourselves calumniated and injured—and the Saints under our charge, knowing we did not deserve such a character. We each wrote the same night to Bro. Bolton. I posted it at 2 o'clock on the following morning, so anxious were we to disabuse the mind of Bro. Bolton of the false impressions he had of us—as well to

inform him that I had sent him 5 pounds sterling some 3 or 4 weeks previous to the time he wrote me—in answer to which I rec^d a week afterwards the following, without date.

The letter that follows is thereupon copied into the journal:

Dear Bro. Hart:

I have not rec^d the letter and money you speak of; I am sitting in Messrs. Mallet & Frere's counting room making the necessary inquiries relating to it. . . .

I do not regret having written what I did about what I heard! It has elicited the letters which cause me to rejoice exceedingly. When I see you I will explain. The money has not been paid to anybody.

God bless you, &c.,
Curtis E. Bolton

By some means, matters seem to have been cleared up for a time. At any rate, in his entry for 17 August 1852 James H. Hart, then en route from London to Paris, recorded a meeting with Hyde at Havre: "Called to see Bro. Hyde and the Saints—I left so abruptly last Dec. Spent 2 hours with them. Bro^s Hyde [and the] Henriod's two brothers, to whom I am much attached, accompanied me and 2 fellow passengers to the railway station, bidding an affectionate adieu." A month later, however, the situation had deteriorated, as we see from Hart's journal: "About this time Bro. John Hyde, Jun. wrote a letter to Bro. Bolton. . . . I will therefore insert it here. It was put in my hand a week ago by Elder Kerby, who read it to me and wished me to keep it. I have resolved to copy it and then to send it or give it to Bro. Bolton." Hyde's remarkable letter, which has certainly never been published before, thereupon follows in the journal. Hyde's problem seems mainly to have been with women, as was indicated earlier by Hart's comments upon another letter sent by Hyde to Bolton. The projection upon others of his own weaknesses, the rationalizations, the desire to participate in deceptions and the sycophancy in the tone of Hyde's letter speak for themselves:

My Beloved Brother and President:

I feel deeply impressed to write to you. I should have written to you a long time ago, but I had anticipated of seeing you en route for Paris. I am glad, however, that you allow yourself a little repose from the Saints at Jersey; you greatly needed it. I wish, God knows how fervently I wish, that I had some good news to communicate. I increase the number of my acquaintance, I preach, teach, lend tracts, but all at present without any great prospect of

success; but methinks I hear you say, All is well, Bro. John Hyde; it is the Lord's work, not ours, &c., &c. . . . [Here as elsewhere in the transcription of this letter, ellipsis periods indicate a hiatus in the manuscript of the journal itself rather than my omission.]

Bro. Hart came through Havre like a meteor & hardly passed an hour with us. He was en route for Paris. I am glad you sent him rather than go yourself, for you want rest, and you ought to rest. I presume by this time Hart is married. [The purpose of his trip to London had been to marry Emily Ellingham; the ceremony had taken place in Clapham, a suburb of London, on 24 August 1852. Bolton lost his way but arrived shortly after the ceremony. Emily accompanied her husband as far as Jersey, where he had provided a house for her.]

Henri [Henriod] passed through Havre. Forgive me, dear Bro., if what I am about to say be wrong. I am sorry almost he ever went to Jersey. The purity of his mind is awfully shaken. His faith in the purity of the Church has more than once tottered; and worse than that is that he has not the wisdom to keep to himself these things. He blurted out to Eugene [Henriod, his brother] tremendous tales about [John] Pack, [Philip] De la M[are], & Jas. Hart. I know that while at Jersey I followed examples set before me and have therefore nothing to boast of, but God knows how sincere has been my repentance of my folly there and how resolute is my determination not to do so again, but Henri is much weakened in his faith. As to experience, the experience he has gained in Jersey is not at all commensurate with the amount of injury sustained. It was high time for him to be removed. I cannot but express the unbounded pleasure I felt at his removal; it was a move inspired by the Spirit of God. I would rather a young man go anywhere than to Jersey for experience, rather that he be shut in among a dozen people on a desert island; but you can realize all my thoughts, for before this time, no doubt, you have seen what necessity there was in your presence and what my reasons for desiring you to go there, for Henri has told me. I am sorry I went there; I wish I had never gone. I could say from my experience that the Saints were pure, but I cannot say so now. I reasoned with him [Henri]; I showed him that principles were independent of men, that the principles are pure, but that until the weeding time the wheat and tares grow together. His mind is tainted, & more than tainted, with S - p - 1 M - e doc^e [spiritual marriage doctrine]. He asked me some questions about it: Why did J[ohn]. P[ac]k take S[acrament].? & Dela M[are]. take S.? I averted the questions. He has shown me several passages in the Bible about it, and especially Isaiah 4th [4:1]. I am glad he is away from the F[rench]. Mission, for otherwise you could not say that the thing was unknown. Happily Henri has not said anything about this thing here. I threatened most positively if he did to cut him off if he dares to do it. I showed him by the Doc[trine]. & Cov-

[enants]. the purity of the principles of truth. I continually hope he will not open his lips about it in Suisse [Switzerland], for a little leaven leaveneth a whole lump. I told Stenhouse⁵ in passing about it, & he has promised to look after him. I am therefore a little sorry he went to Jersey; but after all, all is right, no doubt.

Happily Eugene [Henriod] is convinced of the iniquity of Pack's proceedings and regards with horror such actions & with terror as to their inevitable consequences & will remain so, I hope. I am very glad you are in Jersey; I anticipate great results from your opportune visits. I anticipate that that thing will be almost dead, buried, and mouldered away before you leave. It ought to be, as I told you when talking to you on the jetty here about it. All of us have been pretty evenly splashed with the same mud, but calm reflection will only make men regard it with sorrow & disgust: and sorrow that chains so forged should have so fettered our spirits. I have no doubt that my name comes up along with the rest sometimes; but if any one ever speaks of it, tell them they speak of a John Hyde of 1851 & do me the justice to believe there exists a great difference in the feelings of that person and the John Hyde, Jun., of 1852. A year's thought and experience: the contact & example of men of a resolute purity instead of a determined profligacy as those who presided over me in '51, have operated no little change of mind, & I feel sad, very sad, to have seen Henri splattered with the same mud as that in which I wallowed in '51.

Not that I ever did any thing that would make me blush before the Throne of God. But if kissing and embracing the sisters was the high road to it, then as I told you months ago in Havre, we were all on the road & there was pretty much of a muchness between us all, from the President to his council. I do not know any who were exempt, but I look back with horror on the time & constantly pray that I may never so stray again; & if at any time question might be made of me remember, dear Brother, these are my feelings. I regard such men as unworthy of holding the Priesthood, who lay it at the feet of the girls & who let the women rule them. I regard the Priesthood as much bound to manifest a pure example as pure precept: that the man who preaches purely and acts impurely is a liar & a hypocrite & that the world & the Saints will disregard his preaching but follow his example. I feel that the officer who first led a pure man away into impurity will have to render no small account. . . . The man who never kisses will never do anything else; but if Samsons of power lay their heads upon the necks or bosoms of Delilas, their secret will slip out, and they will lose their virtue and power.

I am not a Samson of strength nor an ascetic of coldness, so I feel not to put myself in such positions; for though we are

⁵T. B. H. Stenhouse went to Geneva to publish *Le Reflecteur* in French after the *Étoile du Déseret* had been terminated.

as strong as Samsons, we can resist no more than he. These are my feelings now. Whatever have been my ideas then, they are changed & I hope eternally. No man, however, can kiss & pull the girls about without feeling he is doing wrong, that he is ruled by his passions and not by the Spirit of God. And now if he feels at all, he realizes this. I know I did, but I shut my ears and would not hearken and closed my eyes and would not see. This is the case with many—I may say *all*—& defy a man to say otherwise. . . . It may do good to read this in Council or any where else or to any body. You may do with it as you please. . . . Let not the Saints excuse themselves by saying Bro. Hyde did this or that. If Brother Hyde set them an example & it was a bad one, they are fools for wishing to burn their fingers because I wished to burn mine.

I regard you as my brother & my friend & believe me,

Yours very truly,
John Hyde, Jun.

Date of postmark, Sept. 24th [1852]
Havre

Following his copy of the letter in his journal, James H. Hart wrote: "I regard the above as another effort on the part of John Hyde, Jun., to blacken my character and that of the Saints under my charge. But thank God Brother Bolton has been here and knows it is false." The time was approaching for Bolton to leave the presidency of the French Mission, to be replaced by Andrew L. Lamoreaux, but before he left he wrote to Hart:

And be assured, my beloved Brother, you enjoy the largest share of my love, esteem and confidence; and I can assure you it is no small sense of satisfaction to me to know that when I take my departure the Saints of Jersey & Guernsey will still be watched over by their beloved President, who has their entire confidence, faith, & prayer, &c.

C. E. Bolton.

The last mention of Hyde in James H. Hart's journal is this:

I feel it unnecessary to extract more from his [Bolton's] letters, but insert verbatim a letter of Elder Bolton to Bro. John Hyde (which will suffice upon this subject) dated Jan. 2nd, 1853.
J[ohn]. Hyde, Jun.

Dear Brother:

I received your letter by due course of mail and have delayed answering it to give me time to try more fully the workings of the Spirit. I must say your letter surprised me considerably, but not so much as had I not known you as I do. The fact is, Bro. John, you have been of but very little service to the French Mis-

sion because of your time being spent in your rooms instead of moving about and making acquaintance. The Church has supported you a year and a half on the French Mission, and what have you done for the Mission? I leave you to answer.

Your great fault is your idea of your own knowledge over the generality of your fellows—and an inordinate desire to put those ideas into print. It would be better to keep your mind within the bounds of your mission that is given you and leave the rest of the world to those who are sent to them. As to the situation of the French Mission, it is just bursting forth into vigor, and had I three or 4 elders who would not know how to write but confine their minds, thoughts, and wishes to the advancement of that Mission, there would be a great field open to them. The Mission had never a brighter prospect, and I feel that much good will be done if I get men whose hearts are exclusively in France.

I feel, Bro. John, willingly to give you up into the hands of Elder S[amuel]. W. Richards [president of the British Mission], and relieve you for the present from the French Mission, which I do in the Name of the Lord. And now you will look to Bro. Richards for counsel. Bro. John, you may think this letter severe, but it is not. I tell you of your faults in order that you may mend, and should but do my duty. If I did not do so, how should I feel that I loved you and were your friend? It will not advance the French Mission much to take young Elders and send them to France to learn French and prepare to be useful there, and as soon as they begin to talk a little, get lovesick and run away and forget all they learned.

I wish you well, Bro. John, & wish you humility, good sense, firmness, and intelligence. I believe crossing the ocean and prairie will do much in your schooling.

Yours affectionately,
C. E. Bolton

Bolton's severe reprimand and dismissal of Hyde conclude the information available concerning the latter's experience in the French Mission. In the book he published in 1857 Hyde passes over the period very rapidly, saying merely, "I remained employed in the French Mission till January, 1853: a portion of which time I was in the Channel Islands, and a portion I spent at Havre-de-Grace."⁶ Since, at the time he wrote these words, he was intent on doing the Church as much injury as possible, it is likely that if he had actually known of anything to discredit the Church, he would have reported it. In any case, his apostasy was no surprise to his former associates in the French Mission. As James H. Hart later wrote, "That John Hyde, Jun., should subsequently apostatize and deny the faith was no more than any person acquainted with him anticipated."

⁶Hyde, *Mormonism*, pp. 18-19.