

has edited and extensively documented an interesting letter that demonstrates the involvement of Joseph Smith's friends in efforts to assist him in his difficulties with the law.

JOSEPH SMITH'S 19 JULY 1840 DISCOURSE

Dean C. Jessee

An occasional theme among Latter-day Saints during times of political crisis has been the prediction attributed to Joseph Smith that the U.S. Constitution would one day hang by a thread and that the elders of the Church would at some critical juncture be instrumental in saving it. The source of this statement is thought to be an unpublished address titled, "A Few Items from a Discourse Delivered by Joseph Smith, July 19, 1840," filed in the Joseph Smith Papers in the LDS Church Archives. Written neatly on 8"×12" paper, the document is obviously a copy since it shows none of the usual characteristics of an original report. The paper appears to be of post-Nauvoo vintage, and the handwriting does not correspond to that of any of Joseph Smith's known clerks. Nor is there reference in the Prophet's History to his having delivered a discourse on 19 July 1840. Furthermore, at two points in the text, there appears to be a serious problem of continuity, suggesting copyist's errors or some other flaw in the manuscript. Consequently, in the absence of an original text, and without information about its origin and authorship, the reliability of this document has remained somewhat tenuous.

Now, the recent surfacing of the original manuscript¹ from which the foregoing copy was taken not only gives some clarification to the question of reliability but also emphasizes, to students of history, the value of tracing one's information to original sources. The 1840 Joseph Smith discourse is one of four reported longhand in a small notebook (3¾"×5½") in the handwriting of Martha Jane Knowlton and Howard Coray.

Martha Jane Knowlton was living with her family in Hancock County, Illinois, when the Latter-day Saints began moving there in

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¹The manuscript was found in the Joseph F. Smith Papers in the LDS Church Archives, Historical Department of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, Salt Lake City, Utah; hereafter cited as Church Archives. It is now filed in the Martha Jane Coray Collection.

1839. She was baptized in January 1840 and, according to one account, was so convinced of Joseph Smith's divine calling that she recorded every discourse she heard him deliver. The Church Historian, George A. Smith, noted that she was more diligent in preserving the Prophet's sayings than any other woman in the Church.² Martha Jane was nineteen and still single when she recorded the 1840 Joseph Smith address as the first item in her little notebook, but after her marriage to Howard Coray in 1841, she continued to use the book for the same purpose.

Since, by 1840, there was not yet a procedure in the Church for systematically reporting all of Joseph Smith's speeches, many of his addresses were never recorded, and others were preserved only unofficially in the personal writings of lay members.³ In addition, the longhand reports recorded at the time were subject to inherent limitations because of the absence among Church members of sufficiently developed shorthand skills to permit verbatim reporting during Joseph Smith's lifetime. This accounts for the existence of some reports of Joseph Smith speeches that are not referred to in the Prophet's History. The Martha Jane Knowlton report of July 1840 is of this genre.

A comparison of the Knowlton original with the copy in the Joseph Smith Papers shows that the loose pages in the original were copied out of sequence, placing one portion of the discourse out of context and transferring a segment of a later discourse into the text of the July 1840 address. Hence, copies made from the later source are inaccurate.

The July 1840 context suggests that Joseph Smith's comments about the U.S. Constitution were given not long after his return from Washington, D.C., where his appeal for redress for the wrongs heaped upon his people in Missouri had fallen upon deaf ears. The address also gives significant insight into the marvelous anticipations and hopes the Prophet had for Nauvoo in its beginning phase. But, as one looks at the city from a later perspective, it is evident that the prophecies about Nauvoo, like Jackson County before it, were contingent upon human conditions and failings.

²*Woman's Exponent* 10 (1 February 1882):133.

³Martha wrote of her habit, since the age of thirteen, of "noting down everything" she heard and read. In Nauvoo she was "occupied from time to time as occasion offered, in making notes of sermons, and other things . . . when I observed that no clerk was present." (Martha Coray to Brigham Young, 13 June 1865, Church Archives.) For another example, see Eugene England, "George Laub's Nauvoo Journal," *BYU Studies* 18 (Winter 1978):151-78.

The discourse as reported by Martha Jane Knowlton is as follows:

A few Item[s] from a discourse delivered by Joseph Smith July 19 - 1840.⁴

Read a chap[ter] in [Ezekiel] concluding with this saying: And when all these things come to pass and Lo they will come then shall you know that a Prophet hath been among you.

Afterwards read the parable of the 12 olive trees and said speaking of the Land of Zion, It consists of all N[orth] & S[outh] America but that any place where the Saints gather is Zion which every righteous man will build up for a place of safety for his children. The olive trees are 12 stakes which are yet to be built not the Temple in Jackson [County, Missouri] as some suppose. For while the 12 stakes are being built we will be at peace but the Nations of the Earth will be at war.

Our cry from the 1st has been for peace and we will continue pleading like the Widow at the feet of the unjust judge but we may plead at the feet of Majistrates and at the feet of Judges, at the feet of Governors and at the feet of senators & at the feet of Pre[s]idents for 8 years it will be of no avail. We shall find no favor in any of the courts of this government. The redemption of Zion is the redemption of all N[orth] & S[outh] America. And those 12 stake[s] must be built up before the redemption of Zion can take place. And those who refuse to gather and build when they are comanded to do so cease to be Saviours of men and are thenceforth good for nothing but shall be cast out and trodden underfeet of men for their transgression, as Reed Peck was when he ap lied in the name of an apostate for buisness in a store in Quincy. They told him that they wanted no apostates round them and showed him the door. At this same store the authorities of this Church could have obtained almost any amount of credit they could have asked.

We shall build the Zion of the Lord in peace untill the servants of that Lord shall begin to lay the foundation of a great and high watch Tower and then shall they begin to say within themselves, what need hath my Lord of this tower seeing this is a time of peace &c. Then the Enemy shall come as a thief in the night and scatter the servants abroad. When the seed of these 12 Olive trees are scattered abroad they will wake up the Nations of the whole Earth. Even this Nation will be on the very verge of crumbling to peices and tumbling to the ground and when the constitution is upon the brink of ruin this people will be the Staff up[on] which the Nation shall lean and they shall bear the constitution away from the very verge of destruction.

Then shall the Lord say, Go tell all my servants who are the strength of mine house, my young men and middle aged &c, come to the Land of my vineyard and fight the battle of the Lord. Then the Kings & Queens shall come; then the rulers of the Earth shall come; then shall all saints come, yea the Foreign saints shall come to fight for the Land of my vineyard for in this thing shall be their safety and they will have no power to choose but will

⁴Some editing has been done for clarity, but it has not altered the meaning. Periods have been put at the ends of sentences and some capitalization added. A small amount of punctuation has been inserted to facilitate reading. Spelling remains as in the original.

come as a man fleeth from a sudden destruction. But before this the time shall be, these who are now my friends shall become my enemies and shall seek to take my life and there are those now before me who will more furiously pursue me [and] the more dilligently seek my life and be more b[l]ood thirsty upon my track than ever were the Misouri Mobbers. You say among yourselves as did them of old time, is it I, & is it I? But I know these things by the visions of the Almighty.

But brethren come ye yea come all of you who can come and go to with your mights and build up the cities of the Lord and whosoever will let him come and partake of the poverty of Nauvoo freely for those who partake of her poverty shall also partake of her prosperity. And it is now wisdom in God that we should enter into as compact a city as posible, for Zion and Jerusalem must both be built up before the coming of Christ. How long will it take to do this, 10 years? Yes, more than 40 years will pass before this work will be accomplished and when these cities are built then shall the coming of the Son of Man be.

Now let all who can coolly and deliberately dispose of their property come up and give of their substance to the [poor?] that the hearts of the poor may be comforted and all may worship God together in holiness of heart. Come brethren come all of you. And I prophecy in the name of the Lord that the state of Illinois shall become a great and mighty mountain as [a] city set upon a hill that cannot be hid and a great that giveth light to the world. The city of Nauvoo als[o] shall become the greatest city in the whole world.

Curse that man who says to his neighbor you are a mean man because you do not believe as I do. I now invite all liberall minded men to come up to Nauvoo and help to build up the city of our God. We are not greatly distressed, no nor ever will be. This is the principle place of gathering therefore let the brethren begin to roll in like clouds and we will sell you lots if you are able to pay for them, and if not you shall have them without money and without price.

The greater blessing is unto those who come in times of adversity. For many will come to us in times of prosperity that will stand at the corners of the streets saying with long pharisaical faces to those that come after them: Don't go near Bro. Joseph, don't go near the authorities of the church for they will pick your pockets; they will rob you of all your money. Thus will they breed in our midst a spirit of dissatisfaction and distrust that will end in persecution and distress.

Now from this hour bring every thing you can bring and build a Temple unto the Lord, a house unto the mighty God of Jacob. We will build upon the top of this Temple a great observatory, a great and high watch tower and in the top thereof we will Suspend a tremendous bell that when it is rung shall rouse the inhabitants of Madison, wake up the people of Warsaw, and sound in the ears of men [in] Carthage. Then comes the ancient records yea all of them. Dig them; yes bring them forth speedily.

Then shall the poor be fed by the curious who shall come from all parts of the world to see this wonderful temple. Yea I prophecy that pleasure parties shall come from England to see the Mamoth and like the Queen of Sheba shall say the half never was told them. School houses shall be built here and High schools shall be established and the great men of the [earth] shall send their sons here to board while they are receiving their education among us. And

even Noblemen shall crave the privilege of educating their children with us and these poor saints shall chink in their pockets the money of these proud men received from such as come and dwell with us.

Now brethren I obligate myself to build as great a temple as ever Solomon did, if the church will back me up. Moreover, it shall not impoverish any man but enrich thousands. And I prophecy that the time shall be when these saints shall ride proudly over the mountains of Missouri and no Gentile dog nor Missouri dog shall dare lift a tongue against them but will lick up the dust from beneath their feet. And I pray the Father that many here may realize this and see it with their eyes. And if it should be (stretching his hand towards the place and in a melancholly tone that made all hearts tremble) [the] will of God that I might live to behold that temple completed and finished from the foundation to the top stone I will say, Oh Lord it is enough Lord let thy servant depart in peace, which is my earnest prayer in the name of the L[ord] Jesus Amen.

BRIGHAM YOUNG AND PRIESTHOOD DENIAL TO THE BLACKS: AN ALTERNATE VIEW

Ronald K. Esplin

Historical commentary about the origin of priesthood denial to the Blacks continues to be flawed by misconceptions and a lack of evidence. Unable to link the teaching directly to Joseph Smith or even to Nauvoo, historians of the question have usually turned to Brigham Young as the author and have imputed purely personal or historical motivation rather than revelatory. Even if that be true—and I here suggest an alternative—it is clear that the practice developed at a different time and place than historians have assumed.

A statement Brigham Young made to the Quorum of the Twelve in February 1849 has assumed an unwarranted importance in the historical evidence on the question. Some have seen it as the earliest clear-cut documentation of a policy of priesthood denial to the Blacks; it is not. Nor is it correct to represent the statement as an official declaration of some kind while ignoring its real implications: it clearly points to an earlier settled policy or doctrine. It was not a pronouncement or decision. It was not a result of debate or lengthy discussion at that time. In 1849 President Young merely responded to a question with an offhand recital of understood fact. There is reason to believe that Apostle

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