

The Second American Revolution: Era of Preparation

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I. *General Preparations*

An analysis of the origin of Mormonism in its historical setting reveals several interesting relationships between its principles and objectives and the trends of the society of the day. Although these relationships do not warrant the conclusion that Joseph Smith borrowed his major ideas from his historical setting, they do show that the claims he made and the principles he set forth were compatible with the spirit and aspirations of the age, and were accepted by many as the means of attaining the goals they urgently sought.

Because the period during Joseph Smith's activity in history was intensely revolutionary, it has been termed the *Second American Revolution*. But unlike the political revolution of the preceding century, that which occurred between 1820 and about 1845¹ was social, religious, and economic as well as political. Orestes A. Brownson said of the nature of that turbulent era:

No tolerable observer of the signs of the time can have failed to perceive that we are, in this vicinity [New England] at least, in the midst of a very important revolution; a revolution which extends to every department of thought, and threatens to change ultimately the whole moral aspect of our society. Everything is loosened from its old fastenings, and is floating no one can tell exactly whither.²

As described by Emerson, the era was one of schism and conflict in which "ancient manners were giving way." It was an age of "severance, of dissociation, of freedom, of analysis, of detachment. . . of universal resistance to ties and ligaments

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¹ Emerson dated this revolutionary era from 1820 to about the twenty years following. See his "Historic Notes of Life and Letters in New England."

² Orestes A. Brownson, "Two Articles from the Princeton Review," *The Boston Quarterly Review*, III (July, 1840), 265-323.

once supposed essential to civil society." Young men in the new generation "were born with knives in their brain, [with] a tendency to introversion, self-dissection, anatomizing of motives." Under the onslaught old forms of authority—in church, college, courts of law, etc.—fell, as experiment became credible and antiquity grew ridiculous.³ Seldom have such great transformations occurred in so short a period of time. The forces of revolution were manifested in many forms. To again quote Emerson, as he noted "the progress of a revolution" in New England:

Those who share in it have no external organization, no badge, no creed, no name. They do not vote, or print, or even meet together. They do not know each other's faces or names. They are united only in a common love of truth and love of its work. They are of all conditions and constitutions.⁴

Continuing, Emerson declared:

This spirit of the time is felt by every individual with some differences—to each one casting its light upon the objects nearest to his temper and habits of thought; to one, coming in the shape of special reforms in the state; to another, in modification of the various callings of men, and the customs of business; to a third, opening a new scope for literature and art; to a fourth, in philosophical insight; to a fifth, in the vast solitudes of prayer. In all its movements, it is peaceable, and in the very lowest marked with a triumphant success.⁵

Socially and economically, egalitarian movements sought to close the gap between the high and the low, the rich and the poor, the privileged and the underprivileged, as reform movements gained strength. The cause of women's rights was championed by ardent zealots who adopted the language of Jefferson in their "Declaration of Sentiments" which emphasized the grievances the fairer sex had suffered under male tyranny, while proclaiming that henceforth women should be free. Religiously, the awakening spirit split every church into Old and New, Papal and Protestant. The rise of Jacksonian Democracy was attended with essentially the same effects in the realm of the political. "It was a proud day for the people," Amos Kendall declared at the inauguration of Jackson; but Justice Story, John

3 Emerson, *op. cit.*

4 Emerson, *The Dial*, I (July, 1840), 1-4.

5 *Ibid.*

Marshall's close friend and disciple on the Supreme Court, reported another mood in accents of bitterness: "The reign of King 'Mob' seemed triumphant."⁶

An important factor that gave rise to conflict in society was an awakening quest for truth and a deeper insight into the meaning of life. As observed by Emerson, men grew "reflective and intellectual." "There was a new consciousness." When these enlightened insights came into contact with the existing order, the position of tradition was challenged, resulting in "a war between intellect and affection."⁷ Another observer said of the enlightening spirit of the age: "The world is deriving vigor, not from that which is gone, but from that which is coming; not from the unhealthy moisture of the evening, but from the nameless influences of the morning."⁸

With the awakening that occurred, "there grew a certain tenderness on the people, not before remarked."⁹ Men realized more keenly their responsibility to their fellow men, to God and even to God's other creatures. While some philanthropic individuals attacked the tyranny of man over brute nature and sought to take the ox from the plough and the horse from the cart, others went even farther. As reported by Emerson, "Even the insect world was to be defended—that had been too long neglected, and a society for the protection of groundworms, slugs and mosquitos was to be incorporated without delay."¹⁰ The spirit of millennial peace was endeavoring to manifest itself in the world.

Many factors combined to make the decades immediately following 1820 an opportune time to reorganize society. This was true particularly in America where men displayed "an astonishing fertility of resource and willingness to change."¹¹ Indeed, rapid change was the "dominant condition of life" at

6 *Argus of Western America*, Frankfort, Kentucky; March 18, 1829; Story to Sarah Waldo Story, March 7, 1829, W. W. Story, *Life and Letters of Joseph Story*, I, 563.

7 Emerson, "Historic Notes," etc.

8 Sampson Reed, "Observations on the Growth of the Mind," 1826.

9 Emerson, *op. cit.*

10 Emerson, "New England Reformers."

11 Carl Russell Fish, *The Rise of the Common Man* (New York, 1929), p. 105.

the time.¹² Several early revelations to Joseph Smith indicate that he was fully aware of the nature of these ideal conditions and evidenced a keener insight into their significance than he could have had by his own limited observation. Repeatedly the admonition was given: "Behold, the field is white already to harvest; therefore, whoso desireth to reap, let him thrust in his sickle with his might, and reap while the day lasts."¹³

America's relative adolescence was important in facilitating change. The mold of her social and economic institutions had not as yet been set. The industrial revolution, with its problems and adjustments, was only then reaching the new world. Jefferson could pass peacefully from the scene hardly moved from his ideals of an agrarian society, but Jackson came to the presidency two years later supported to an important degree by the laboring classes, who were then seeking answers to the problems of industrialization. Could something be done to alleviate the distressing conditions in an industrialized society? Must that which had happened in England and other countries through industrialization be repeated in America? These questions loomed larger and larger, and adequate answers were nowhere in sight. In his brilliant essay, "The Laboring Classes," Orestes A. Brownson sought such answers. The fact that he produced such a work is symptomatic of the times; men were keenly aware of their unsolved problems.

In other ways America was coming of age. By 1820 literary developments commenced to keep pace with America's physical progress. In that and the following year were published Irving's masterpiece, *The Sketch Book*, Bryant's first volume of *Poems*, and Cooper's novel, *The Spy*. America was coming of age. With such growth Americans developed an attitude of self-centered confidence that detached them from European influence and centered attention upon their own social arrangements. The spirit of the Monroe Doctrine was widespread in the United States so that diplomatic relations with Europe were reduced to a minimum. Fewer young men went abroad to study than before or since. Thus, during this period of intense reform the

12 Oscar Handlin, "The American Scene," *The Forty-Eighters: Political Refugees of the German Revolution of 1848*, ed. by A. E. Zucker (New York, 1950), p. 28.

13 See *Doctrine and Covenants*, 4:4; 6:3; 11:3; 12:3; 14:3; 33:3,7.

attention of the American people was not diverted from the task of introspection and self-analysis to any great degree by outside influences from abroad.

Other factors were also operating to bring American institutions and experiments in social organization to the public attention at home and abroad, as they never could have been before. Prominent people in Europe were beginning to pay more than passing attention to the new republic and the principles upon which it was founded. Heretofore, many foreign observers had viewed America's republican institutions with reserve bordering on disdain, but now they looked with favor and anticipation toward America. Harriet Martineau aptly indicated this change of attitude in the following words:

It is common to say "Wait; these are early days. The experiment [of American government] will yet fail." The experiment of the particular constitution of the United States may fail; but the great principle, which, whether successful or not, it strives to embody, the capacity of mankind for self-government—is established forever.¹⁴

The spirit of reform was widespread in Europe as well as in America, and reformers in western Europe were thinking along lines and striving toward similar goals as their American contemporaries. In Great Britain the Reform Bill of 1832, the Factory Act of 1833, and the repeal of the Corn laws in 1846 were major victories won in the name of reform. On the continent of Europe reform was a grim business, made so by the fact that Liberals there were faced with an organized program of repression—the so-called "Metternich system"—that sought through police control, censorship, and espionage to suppress liberal movements. For this reason, reformers in Europe looked hopefully to America where their counterparts were allowed free rein in developing their ideas. Here was added reason why European attention was centered upon America.¹⁵

The stage was set for people in America and in Europe to take cognizance of any new society that might develop here and

14 Martineau, *Society in America* (London, 1837), I, 2-3.

15 Whenever influences from Europe did find expression in America, they merely aided the progressing revolution without distracting America's attention from herself. Utopian schemes patterned after Owenism and Fourierism are examples. The same was true in the case of New England's Transcendentalist school. When they appealed to European thought, they did so to "find confirma-

command a hearing; it was a time when foreign travelers and local reporters sought to record and explain the wonderful phenomenon of American society with its many experimental projects. There was what *The Evening and Morning Star*, published by the Saints in Missouri, described as an "unquenchable thirst for news."¹⁶ The attention that was centered upon American society was intense, as was indicated by a more recent writer:

The generation was exposed to a continual "close-up" without having learned how to appear before the camera. Never before was the surface of life so exposed to the gaze of the public and the future. . . . Never before were there so many travelers to observe them, with so easy a market for their observations when put into print. Never had the busy reporters of the newspapers been so numerous and so alert to catch the mass or the individual in some unusual pose, some amusing gesture.¹⁷

It requires but a moment of candid reflection to see how this insatiable quest for news made it easy to spread the message of Mormonism abroad. The alleged appearance of an angel and the unearthing of a "Golden Bible" were topics of immediate interest. It was not long before the work was spoken of by people near and far, either for good or for evil. And amid the din of discussion those who were conscientious sought out the truth of the matter for themselves.

The general upheaval in society was accompanied by a large-scale migration of people in America. From 1830 to at least 1850 the impulse to migrate grew stronger as the facilities

tion" for their faith, not to lay the foundations for their thought. See Parrington, *Main Currents In American Thought* (New York, 1930), II, 381-82. The reflective and intellectual mood, the new consciousness—these were the incipient factors in developing the movement. Transcendentalism was an American school, confirmed, aided and abetted by European scholarship.

16 July, 1832.

17 Fish, *op. cit.*, p. 137. Alexis de Tocqueville visited and wrote of the Shaker community, near Albany, New York; Mrs. (Frances) Trollope, from England, underwent considerable hardships to visit Fanny Wright's community at Nashoba, Tennessee; Fredrika Bremer, a Swedish writer, visited the North American Phalanx, a Fourierist community in New Jersey, on more than one occasion, and went also to see the Shakers; Friedrich List, a prominent economist, spoke favorably of George Rapp's community at Economy; the German Duke of Saxe-Weimar-Eisenach went to observe, first, Robert Owen's New Harmony experiment in Indiana, and then the Rappite society at Economy; and Charles Dickens made an American tour in which he visited the Shakers at Mount Lebanon in New York. To these international figures could be added several other observers, foreign and American, who looked hopefully toward Brook Farm, the Shaker colonies and other similar experiments.

for transportation improved. Alexis de Tocqueville, foremost European critic of American democracy, gave the following description of population movements in the early thirties: "An American takes up, leaves, goes back to ten occupations, in his life; he is constantly changing his domicile and is continually forming new enterprises." Again: "In the United States a man builds a house in which to spend his old age, and he sells it before the roof is on; he plants a garden, and lets it just as the trees are coming into bearing; he brings a field into tillage, and leaves other men to gather the crops."¹⁸

The prevailing tendency to move and relocate made it easy for new movements to establish themselves by facilitating the gathering together of those of like sympathies. In the Mormon movement, the "spirit of the gathering" was also very important; yet the barriers were greatly reduced by the migratory conditions of the time. For these two reasons, converts to Mormonism readily left their homes for the centers of gathering; and thereafter moved westward from New York state to the Great Basin in the West.

In summary, during the Second American Revolution, many possessed an intense spirit of reform. There was a deeper insight into the nature of life and its meaning. Men repudiated the past and sought for something more compatible with the spirit of the age. Finally, there was an unquenchable thirst for news and a high degree of mobility on the part of the people. All these factors combined to make the period from 1820 to 1845 an ideal time to introduce the Mormon movement. It was an era when old forms and customs were being done away and when the mold of new socio-religious and economic systems could easily be set.

II. *Religious Preparations*

The fervor of the Second American Revolution was distinctly and increasingly religious. Almost every topic of discussion was invested with the religious qualities of certainty and enthusiasm. It was an era in which John Humphrey Noyes could seriously nominate Jesus Christ for the Presidency of the United States of America and of the whole world, and have

18 G. W. Pierson, *Tocqueville and Beaumont in America* (New York, 1938), p. 130; Alexis de Tocqueville, *Democracy in America* (Cambridge, Massachusetts, 1863), II, 164.

such a nomination bear fruit in the form of a Peace Convention held in 1838.

From 1820 onward the efforts of religious enthusiasts grew apace, and several practical measures were taken to promote the development of religious feeling. The American Tract Society was organized in 1825, and by 1831 it had 20 vice-presidents and 36 directors. In the year prior to its sixth annual meeting it distributed approximately 65,000,000 tracts. The American Home Missionary Society was effected in 1826 with the objective of converting the world, commencing with the unregenerated souls in America. The Society employed 201 missionaries who labored in eighteen different states; but as New York was the place of greatest religious interest, 113 of these were assigned to work in that state. There, people were "dead-ripe" for conversion.¹⁹ Finally, the American Sunday School Union was organized with the objective of establishing Sunday Schools everywhere. By 1827 it had over 400,000 children under instruction, with 60,000 teachers.

By 1831 the developing religious sentiment reached a climax. "The year 1831 is known in religious annals of America as the year of the 'great awakening,'" one writer explained. "There had been religious revivals before, but none so great as the one that shook the country in the years 1831 to 1834."²⁰ These years correspond with the period in which the message of Mormonism was introduced to the world. With the consuming interest in religious matters, the proponents of the new revelation made it a prominent topic of discussion.

Religiously, as well as socially, the existing state of expectancy expressed itself in the hope of the millennium. Never in the history of Western society had the millennium seemed so imminent; never before had people looked so longingly and

19 As reported by Theodore Weld to Charles G. Finney. See *Weld Papers*, I, 45. New York very probably produced more converts to the Church than any other state in the Union. It was here that the missionaries found their most receptive adherents. See Whitney Cross, *The Burned-over District* (Ithaca, 1950), p. 149. Early missionary journals support Cross's conclusions.

20 *Religious Experiences of John Humphrey Noyes, Founder of the Oneida Community*, ed. George Wallingford Noyes (New York, 1923), p. 32. While the thoughtful and virtuous placed a deeper reliance upon spiritual fact, after 1831 there was in all the practical affairs of society a gradual withdrawal of genuine religious feeling. From that time on much of the existing fervor was founded in emotionalism and radicalism. See, for example, Emerson's "Divinity School Address," where this fact is pointed out.

hopefully for its advent. It was expected that twenty years or less would see the dawn of that peaceful era.²¹ Men turned their thoughts inward and upward. Spiritual realms were explored and "theories of the Christian miracles" were readily expounded.²² Many were persuaded to accept the reality of spiritual fact, including the millennium and its attendant miracles.

Contrary to the popular feeling of the day, Joseph Smith did not look for the immediate advent of Christ: Zion had first to be built and her law established in the earth; the Jews must gather to Palestine to build their temple and become sanctified; the American Indians had to be rehabilitated until their lands would "blossom as a rose"; and, finally, if the world failed to repent, the judgments of the last days would first be poured out.²³ Christ would come, said a revelation to the Prophet, in a day when the "whole earth shall be in commotion, and men's hearts fail them, and they shall say that Christ delayeth his coming until the end of the earth."²⁴ Nevertheless, the existing millennialism gave impetus to the work at hand. "We all look for the appearing of the great God, and our Saviour Jesus Christ," declared a church writer, "but we shall look in vain, until Zion is built; for Zion is to be the dwelling place of our God when he comes."²⁵

The religious awakening was accompanied by a widespread urge among the people to get back to the purity of Christ's gospel, a desire that was particularly important in preparing the minds of men for the message of Mormonism. The movement which adopted the name "Disciples of Christ"—headed by such men as Thomas and Alexander Campbell, Sidney Rigdon, Barton W. Stone, and Walter Scott—developed as a result of this awakening urge. The name they adopted aptly expresses the guiding sentiment that brought about their organization. In 1800 there was no religious denomination of any significance calling itself after the name of Christ; but the individual and

21 See Cross, *op. cit.*, pp. 25-6; *Religious Experiences of John Humphrey Noyes*, pp. 33-4; Fish, *op. cit.*, p. 3.

22 Emerson, "New England Reformers."

23 *History of the Church*, V, 324, 336-7; *Doctrine and Covenants*, 49:24; 87.

24 *Doctrine and Covenants*, 45:26.

25 *Messenger and Advocate*, III (September, 1837), 563.

concerted efforts of many, including the Campbells and their associates to get back to the fundamentals of Christ's gospel, brought the "Disciples of Christ" into being as an organization.²⁶

Alexander Campbell became one of the leading religious figures in the America of his day. His views were in harmony with the existing trends, leading simultaneously to a repudiation of traditional dogma and to the quest for the pure Christian doctrine and faith. "We are convinced, fully convinced," he declared, "that the whole head is sick, and the whole heart faint of modern fashionable Christianity."²⁷ On the other hand he expressed the hopes and aspirations of many when he inquired:

. . . do not the experiences of all the religions—the observations of the intelligent—the practical result of all creeds, reformations, and improvements—and *the expectations and longings of society*—warrant the conclusion that either some new revelation, or some new development of the revelation of God must be made, before the hopes and expectations of all true Christians can be realized, or Christianity save and reform the nations of the world? We want the old gospel back, and sustained by the ancient order of things: and this alone, by the blessing of the Divine Spirit, is all that we want, or can expect, to reform and save the world.²⁸

A recommissioned body of Priesthood was also sought by Campbell. "A divine warrant has always been essential to any acceptable worship," he declared. "The question, 'Who has required this at your hands'? must always be answered by a 'Thus saith the Lord,' before an offering of mortal man can be acknowledged by the Lawgiver of the universe." A "regular and constant ministry," he asserted, must be commissioned with "divine authority."²⁹

The state of expectancy in the religious world was such that "many thousands of people were yearning for the 'primitive gospel'; the words 'Reformation,' 'Restoration,' and 'the Ancient Order of Things' were in the air."³⁰ This was particularly true in the Campbellite movement where "hundreds began

26 See Winfred Ernest Garrison and Alfred T. DeGroot, *The Disciples of Christ* (St. Louis, 1948), pp. 80-2.

27 *The Christian Baptist*, I, 33.

28 *The Christian System*, p. 10. (Italics by the writer.)

29 *The Christian System*, p. 250.

30 Daryl Chase, "Sidney Rigdon—Early Mormon," Unpublished Master's Thesis, University of Chicago, June, 1931, pp. 2-3.

to declare themselves for the 'Restoration.' ''³¹ One historian described the work of Campbell's associate, Walter Scott, as follows:

He contended ably for the restoration of the true, original apostolic order which would restore to the church the ancient gospel as preached by the apostles. The interest became an excitement; . . . The air was thick with rumors of a "new Religion," a "new Bible."³²

In 1830, Campbell discontinued publication of the *Christian Baptist* and began a new periodical, the *Millennial Harbinger*. The name of the new organ was indicative of the growing sentiment of religious expectancy. To epitomize his objective in setting forth the need for a restoration of the Ancient Order of Things, etc., Campbell headed the Prospectus with the passage of scripture most often quoted by Latter-day Saints as fulfilled in the coming of the angel Moroni to reveal the everlasting Gospel, contained in the *Book of Mormon*:

I saw another messenger flying through the midst of heaven, having everlasting good news to proclaim to the inhabitants of the earth, even to every nation and tribe, and tongue and people—saying with a loud voice, Fear God and give glory to Him, for the hour of His judgment is come; and worship Him who made heaven, and earth, and the sea, and the fountains of water.³³

Campbell could not better have prepared the people for the message of Mormonism had he planned his work toward that end from the beginning. Even a preparation of the minds of men for the story of the angel Moroni and the revelation of the everlasting Gospel was not excluded. It is little wonder that Sidney Rigdon and other important figures among the Disciples gave serious consideration to the claims set forth by Joseph Smith. A Disciple historian caustically reported that prior to his conversion to Mormonism Rigdon, "with pompous pretense," was anticipating "some great event soon to be revealed to the surprise and astonishment of mankind." The modern Elias "was prepared and preparing others for the voice of some mysterious

31 *Ibid.*, p. 35.

32 A. S. Hayden, *Early History of the Disciples' Church in the Western Reserve* (1876).

33 *The Millennial Harbinger*, I (January 4, 1830), 1. The translation is evidently Campbell's.

event soon to come."³⁴ Following Rigdon's conversion a revelation through Joseph Smith said:

Behold, verily, verily, I say unto my servant Sidney, I have looked upon thee and thy works. I have heard thy prayers and prepared thee for a greater work. Thou art blessed for thou shalt do great things. Behold thou wast sent forth, even as John, to prepare the way before me, and before Elijah which should come, and thou knewest it not.³⁵

In an effort to curb a mass conversion to the Mormon movement from among his followers, Campbell bitterly attacked the *Book of Mormon*; and the *Millennial Harbinger* carried articles with such titles as, "Mormonism—the Means by Which It Stole the True Gospel." When Hayden later sought to explain the Disciple's dilemma, he lamented that "the misfortune governing the case was that many people, victims of excitement and credulity, and taught in nearly all pulpits to pray for faith, now found themselves met on their own grounds." The Mormon Elders likewise exhorted them to pray in faith and to believe the scriptures; and God would reveal to them that the claims Joseph Smith made were true. "And so, finding an emotion or impulse answerable to an expected response from heaven, [they] dared not dispute the answer to their own prayers, and were hurried into the vortex."³⁶ God was answering the humble prayer of faith in behalf of the "imposters."

On a more sophisticated and intellectual plane, but nevertheless in harmony with the current trends of the time, such men as Emerson, Thoreau and Parker turned their thoughts to the realm of transcendent meditation; and from this vantage point they expressed hopes similar to those set forth by Campbell and his associates, with a like effect in preparing the minds of men for the message of Mormonism. In his famous "Divinity School Address" of 1838, Emerson exhorted the graduating class of the Cambridge Divinity College to "cast behind you all conformity and acquaint men at first hand with Deity." "It is

³⁴ Hayden, *op. cit.*, pp. 209-18.

³⁵ *Book of Commandments*, ch. XXXVII, Verses 3-6. In later years, when a Cambellite congregation near Manchester, England sought information on the Mormon claim to a Restoration at the hands of L.D.S. authorities in that area, Parley P. Pratt wrote to Sidney Rigdon, in America: "Tell friend Campbell to go ahead and prepare the way, the Saints will follow him up and gather the fruits." *Times and Seasons*, II (April 1, 1841), 365.

³⁶ See Hayden, *op. cit.*, pp. 174, 197, 209-18.

my duty," he emphasized, "to say to you that the need was never greater of new revelation than now." On another occasion Emerson lamented that, while "foregoing generations beheld God and nature face to face," modern man only beheld God through the eyes of the Ancients. "Why should we not also enjoy an original relation to the universe?" he cried. "Why should we not have a poetry and philosophy of insight and not of tradition, and a religion by revelation to us and not the history of theirs?"³⁷

Theodore Parker, who "preferred the Jesus of historic fact to the Christ of theologic fancy,"³⁸ claimed that there was but one true religion, and that all others were merely based upon men's opinions of the permanent word of Christ. These views he set forth in an address significantly entitled "Transient and Permanent." Therein he expressed his desire that the transient forms devised by men might pass away and that there might be a renewal of the permanent gospel of Christ. Said he:

Let then the transient [man-made dogma] pass, fleet as it will, and may God send us some new manifestation of the Christian faith, that shall stir men's hearts as they were never stirred; some new word, which shall teach us what we are, and renew us in the image of God; some better life, that shall fulfill the Hebrew prophecy, and pour out the spirit of God on young men and maidens, and old men and children; which shall realize the word of Christ and give us the Comforter, who shall reveal all needed things!³⁹

George Ripley and Orestes A. Brownson shared similar views. They felt the time had arrived "to clothe the religious sentiment with a new form, and to fix upon some religious institution, which will at once supply our craving for something positive in religion, and not offend the spirituality which Christianity loves."⁴⁰ Brownson pointed to the widespread nature of this awakening quest. Said he: "It comes to us on every wind from all quarters,—from France, from Germany, from England even."⁴¹ Likewise Ripley wrote: "We respond, with living

³⁷ Emerson, "Nature."

³⁸ Theodore Parker, *Theodore Parker's Experiences as a Minister* (Boston, 1859).

³⁹ Parker, "Transient and Permanent."

⁴⁰ *The Christian Examiner*, XVII (September, 1834), 63-77; XXI (1836), 225-54.

⁴¹ Brownson, "The Everlasting Yes."

sympathy, to the earnest voice that comes to us from beyond the sea, calling for a new organ of theology."⁴² On the European scene Harriet Martineau in England and Carl Schurz in Germany registered the fact that this spiritual awakening was widespread in those areas.⁴³ The religious awakening supplemented the general trends of the day to make this era a favorable time to introduce Mormonism into the world.

III. *The Mormon Scene*

Prior to the time most of the early converts cast their lot with Joseph Smith they, first, became dissatisfied with existing creeds and forms of religious organizations. Second, they were seeking to get at the truth of the Bible's teachings pertaining to salvation. And third, often they were seeking for a new revelation of the pure Christian faith—a revelation coming directly from God.

Such sentiments occupied the mind of Joseph Smith when first he went into the woods to pray in the spring of 1820. But Joseph Smith was not the only one to retire to a secluded place to pray about this matter; and he was not unique in thereafter concluding that existing religious faiths "were all wrong."⁴⁴ Thousands were engaged in such soul-searching experiences. Said George Q. Cannon of the early Mormon converts:

. . . it may be said that hundreds and thousands had a yearning, anxious desire for something higher, something nobler, something more certain, something that was from God. This feeling animated thousands of hearts in various lands, and the Elders were guided to them, and when they saw their faces, when they heard their teachings and humbled themselves in obedience to the commandments of God, they became profoundly convinced by the testimony of Jesus Christ, that the Gospel they taught was indeed the ancient Gospel restored.⁴⁵

On another occasion, President Cannon said of the early experiences of Wilford Woodruff and others:

I have heard him [Wilford Woodruff] relate that in his early days he has gone out in secret and besought God to restore the ancient Gospel, to restore the ancient gifts, to restore the ancient power, and he received a promise from God be-

42 *The Christian Examiner*, XXI, 225-54.

43 *Harriet Martineau's Autobiography* (London, 1877), pp. 112-3; Carl Schurz, *The Reminiscences of Carl Schurz* (New York, 1907), I, 69-71.

44 Joseph Smith's "First Vision," *History of the Church*, I, 6.

45 J. D., XXII, 240-1.

fore he ever heard of the Latter-day Saints, or ever heard of the organization of this Church, that the time would come when the true Gospel would be restored, and that he should have the privilege of being identified with it. And the thousands that compose this Church today, who joined it when they were adults, were, the most of them, in a similar condition, a similar state of mind. Dissatisfied with existing creeds, . . . conscious that there was an absence of that divine power and of those heavenly gifts which characterized the Church in ancient days; dissatisfied with this condition of things, they besought God earnestly, fervently, and anxiously, to restore His Gospel to the earth, or to send some message of life and salvation unto them. They were thus prepared, and it is those few who have been gathered from the nations of the earth. . . . Joseph Smith said that this would be the character of this work.⁴⁶

As early as 1823 Joseph Smith was made aware of the effect the work he was to inaugurate would have upon men. Said Moroni to him at that time: "Wherever the sound [of the new dispensation] shall go, it shall cause the ears of men to tingle, and wherever it shall be proclaimed, the pure in heart shall rejoice, while those who draw near to God with their mouths, and honor Him with their lips while their hearts are far from Him, will seek its overthrow, and the destruction of those by whose hands it is carried."⁴⁷ No truer forecast could have been made of the effect the message of Mormonism would have upon the world.

A study of the early converts reveals to what extent they were prepared for the Restoration. At an early age George A. Smith inquired "after the original principles of the Gospel," and soon concluded that prevailing "religious motions were mere matter of opinion."⁴⁸ When Joseph Smith wrote in 1828, giving an account of the spiritual manifestations he had received, the letter made a powerful impression upon the family of John Smith.⁴⁹

So intent was Orson Pratt in seeking for spiritual light, as a lad of eighteen, that he did not give himself the necessary time for rest. Said he: "I took the privilege, while others had retired

46 J.D., XXV, 171-2.

47 *Messenger and Advocate*, February, 1835.

48 *Millennial Star*, XXVII, 406.

49 "George A. Smith's Journal," under 1828. No other date given. Church Historian's office, Salt Lake City, Utah.

to rest, to go out in the fields and wilderness and there plead with the Lord, hour after hour, that he would show me what to do—that he would teach me the way of life and inform and instruct my understanding.” Many times he was solicited to join the churches in the area, “but something whispered not to do so.” When he heard the message of Mormonism, he said: “As soon as the sound penetrated my ears, I knew that if the *Bible* was true, their doctrine was true.”⁵⁰

Wilford Woodruff had a similar experience, and was baptised after the first sermon he heard.⁵¹ When he was informed that two Elders had scheduled a meeting near his residence, Woodruff started for the meeting place without waiting for supper, praying “most sincerely” that he might discern the truthfulness of the message. During the meeting the “Spirit bore witness” that the *Book of Mormon* had been revealed by God; and when liberty was given that any in the congregation might express themselves concerning the message they had heard, Woodruff was “almost instantly” upon his feet. He exhorted his neighbors and friends not to oppose the missionaries, as they had preached the “pure gospel of Jesus Christ.” When he concluded others, including his brother Azmon, “arose and bore a similar testimony.”⁵²

Before Brigham Young heard of Mormonism he “had searched everything pertaining to the Churches,” but was unable to find “a Bible church upon the earth.”⁵³ Consequently, he became “sick, tired, and disgusted with the world” and its “vain, foolish, wicked, and unsatisfying customs and practices.” This attitude he retained until he read the *Book of Mormon*.⁵⁴ His brother, Joseph Young, was of the same disposition and once said: “Brother Brigham, there are no Bible Christians upon the face of the earth, and I do not see any possible escape for the human family.” So deeply concerned was he that he did not have a “smile on his countenance for years.”⁵⁵ In like manner, William W. Phelps “had long been searching for the ‘old

50 *Deseret News*, IX, 153-5.

51 See J. D., IV, 99; *Millennial Star*, XXVII, 182.

52 Matthias F. Cowley, *Wilford Woodruff* (Salt Lake City, 1909), pp. 32-3.

53 J. D., X, 311; XXI, 46.

54 J. D., V, 39; VIII, 129.

55 J. D., VIII, 129.

paths' " but never believed that any of the sects of the day "possessed the truth." Upon hearing of the *Book of Mormon*, he later wrote, "I rejoiced that there was something coming to point the right way to heaven."⁵⁶

Many who were awakened expressed confidence that God would restore His true Gospel to men. Dr. Willard Richards repudiated the sects and declared boldly that God "would soon have a church whose creed would be the truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth."⁵⁷ After endeavoring to reconcile the doctrine of his church with the *Bible* and failing to "make it correspond," Thomas B. Marsh withdrew from all sects. To his old class leader in Boston, Massachusetts, he declared that he "expected a new church would arise, which would have the truth in its purity."⁵⁸ David W. Patten was also searching for a new revelation from God. Said he: "By dreams and visions, many things were made known unto me, which were to come; and from the teachings I received of the Holy Spirit, I was looking for the Church of Christ to arise in its purity, according to the promise of Christ, and that I should live to see it." When Patten heard of the "restoration of the Gospel," by letter from his brother, he arose in church and informed his friends and neighbors that he "had at last got word of the Church of Christ." Next day he started on a journey of three hundred miles to join the new church.⁵⁹

Others with like anticipations included Jesse W. Crosby, William Huntington, Lorin Farr, and Samuel Holister Rogers. Through the "visions" of his mind Crosby had been assured of these things to such extent that "none of the excitements of the day" thereafter affected him. Huntington was so convinced that for some two or three years he proclaimed publicly that such a church would rise in his day. Farr received his assurance largely from his grandfather, who passed away about two years before the family heard of Mormonism. When the Elders proclaimed the doctrine of the Restoration, Farr exclaimed: "Why, that is what my grandfather said." The Rogers family claimed

56 *Messenger and Advocate*, I (February, 1835), 65; I (May, 1835), 115

57 *History of the Church*, II, 470.

58 *Millennial Star*, XXVI, 360.

59 *Millennial Star*, XXVI, 406; Lycurgus A. Wilson, *Life of David W. Patten, The First Apostolic Martyr* (Salt Lake City, 1900), pp. 2-4.

to have received their hope concerning the new church from a stranger who visited the vicinity in which they lived several years before, and promised them "that they would all live to see it and would join it."⁶⁰

When the message of the restored Church spread beyond the confines of the United States, missionaries of the Church found that a similar preparation had occurred in other lands. In the spring of 1836, Parley P. Pratt was sent to Toronto, Canada, to "find a people prepared for the fulness of the gospel."⁶¹ After being refused the opportunity of preaching in the churches and civic halls of the place, Pratt visited a group who "had been wont to assemble and search the scriptures." This group, he wrote at the time, "had discovered the corruptions of Christendom, and were diligently searching for truth." The result of their discussion was that "they felt the need of prophets and apostles to organize them, and minister the ordinances and spirit to them." Some suggested, "Let us be agreed and ask for God to commission us by revelation." Said others: "It might be that the Lord has already commissioned apostles in some parts of the world; and if he has, it must come from them."⁶²

"During this time," Pratt wrote,

I had listened in silence: sometimes crying and sometimes smiling—my heart burning within me. Someone at length observed that a stranger was in the room, who might wish to speak. I said that I should be glad to speak on the subject in the evening: liberty was granted, and an appointment made: after which they kneeled down and in tears confessed their naked, destitute situation; praying God to pity and relieve them.⁶³

Thereafter, multitudes flocked to hear the Mormon Elder from the United States. Said Pratt: "I preach, read and con-

60 "The History and Journal of Jesse W. Crosby, 1820-1869," Typewritten copy in Brigham Young University Library, pp. 1-3; "Diaries of William Huntington," Typewritten copy in Brigham Young University Library, in "Mormon Diaries," XVI, 1-2; Edward W. Tullidge, *Northern Utah and Southern Utah (Biographies of the Founders and Representative Men)* (Salt Lake City, 1889), p. 176; "Journal of Samuel Holister Rogers," Typewritten copy in Brigham Young University Library, pp. 2-3.

61 *Autobiography of Parley P. Pratt*, pp. 130-31.

62 Letter of Parley P. Pratt, to John Whitmer, *Messenger and Advocate*, II (May, 1836), 317-8.

63 *Ibid.*

verse to people all day and all night: sometimes the morning sun is dawning upon us before we have thought of rest; and generally the clock strikes twelve before we retire."⁶⁴

As Elder Pratt left for Toronto, it was prophesied by Heber C. Kimball that "from things growing out of this mission, shall the fulness of the gospel spread into England, and cause a great work to be done in that land."⁶⁵ After investigating the situation in England, through the writings and reports coming to people in Canada from friends and former associates in the Old World, Pratt wrote: "Tens of thousands are awakened in that land to these subjects, and are sending swift messengers to the nations around them, to teach these things [the need for a restoration of gospel truth], insomuch that the excitement seems to have become general among kings and nobles, priests and people." Pratt wrote an eleven-page letter to England, giving the people there an account of "the work of the Lord among us."⁶⁶

Information on the rise of Mormonism had already reached parts of England, however, more than a year before Pratt wrote to that land; and a council of the pastors of the Irvingite movement, held March 28, 1835, decided to send a representative to America to investigate the matter. The following month they wrote to certain Mormon Elders, stating:

The Lord hath seen our joy and gladness to hear that He was raising up a people for himself in that part of the New World, as well as here—O may our faith increase that he may have evangelists, apostles and prophets filled with the power of the Spirit, and performing his will in destroying the works of darkness.

The Rev. Mr. John Hewitt [their representative] was professor of Mathematics in Rother'm Independent Seminary, and four years pastor of Barnesly Independent Church. He commenced preaching the doctrines we taught about two years since, and was excommunicated—many of his flock followed him, so that eventually he was installed in the same church, and the Lord's work prospered. As he is a living epistle you will have, if all is well, a full explanation. Many will follow

64 *Ibid.*

65 Autobiography of Parley P. Pratt, *op. cit.*

66 *Messenger and Advocate*, II (May, 1836), 318.

should he approve of the country, i.e. who will help the cause, because the Lord hath favored them with this world's goods.⁶⁷

This letter not only reveals the nature of the religious awakening in the British Isles, it also reflects the tendency on the part of many there to look expectantly toward America. But upon his arrival, the Rev. Hewitt became prejudiced toward certain claims of Mormonism, possibly from the perverse reports against the Church, and no real benefit came from his visit.

When Heber C. Kimball and Orson Hyde of the Quorum of the Twelve, with others, went to England in 1837, they found a fruitful field. Several ministers were preaching on the evils of contemporary Christianity and the need for a restoration. It was from among such groups, in particular, that the Mormon missionaries found the most ready converts.⁶⁸ During the first eight months of proselyting, the missionaries converted some two thousand people.⁶⁹ There came a time when church membership in the British Isles was greater than that in America. Wilford Woodruff became one of the greatest champions of Mormonism in the British Isles. His work at Herefordshire was of particular significance. There he found a group of over six hundred people who had broken off from the Wesleyan Methodists and "were continually calling upon the Lord to open the way before them and send them light and knowledge that they might know the way to be saved." In six months Elder Woodruff saw this group, with the exception of one person, come into the Church; and in addition, twelve hundred others were converted in that area.⁷⁰

Later, in the 1840's, John Taylor and others introduced the work among the French people. Before leaving that field of labor, a conference was held at which some four hundred members were represented.⁷¹ Again, it was principally among those previously awakened to a quest for a faith more consistent with the spirit and teachings of original Christianity that Mormonism

⁶⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 316.

⁶⁸ See Orson F. Whitney, *Life of Heber C. Kimball* (Salt Lake City, 1888), pp. 161-4.

⁶⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 204.

⁷⁰ Wilford Woodruff, *Leaves from My Journal* (Salt Lake City, 1882), pp. 77-9; J. D. XVIII, 122-5; XXI, 315.

⁷¹ J. D., I, 19-24.

found its converts. It was with real meaning that George Q. Cannon said of the majority of early converts from America and Europe: "They have been convinced of the truth very frequently before they scarcely heard it."⁷²

IV. *Socio-Economic Preparations*

Few years so clearly mark the commencement of a new era as does the year 1829⁷³ when the foundations of the new Dispensation, laid April 6, 1830, were being prepared. America in that day was a "country of beginnings, of projects, of designs, of expectations," aimed at the "reform of domestic, civil, literary, and ecclesiastical institutions."⁷⁴ It was simultaneously an age of iconoclasts and utopians.

In the opinion of many the whole of society was to be made over, not merely some of its parts reformed; fundamental causes, not effects, had to be altered. "The evil we speak of is inherent in all our social arrangements," Brownson declared, "and cannot be cured without a radical change of those arrangements."⁷⁵ Robert Owen agreed, contending not merely for an "extensive" but for a "universal" renovation of society—"an immediate and almost instantaneous revolution in the minds and manners of the society."⁷⁶ Fourier, the French reformer whose ideas had a powerful effect upon America in the 1840's, held similar views. His American proponent, Albert Brisbane, emphasized the need for doing "away with civilization itself" and organizing all things anew.⁷⁷ The prevailing attitude led Emerson to exclaim: "What is a man born for but to be a Reformer, a Remaker of what man has made; a renouncer of lies; a restorer of truth and good, imitating that great Nature which embosoms us all, and

72 J. D., XXII, 322:23.

73 See Albert Bushnell Hart, *The American Nations: A History* (New York, 1906), XV, xi.

74 Emerson, "The Young American;" "Lectures on the Times."

75 Orestes A. Brownson, "The Laboring Classes," a review of Thomas Carlyle's *Chartism*, originally published in the *Boston Quarterly Review*, 1840.

76 See Robert Owen, *Report to the County of Lanark* (Glasgow, 1821), reprinted among the appendices to *The Life of Robert Owen*, by himself (2 vols. [Number I and I.A.] London, 1857-58), I.A., 287; "Discourse in Washington," February 25, 1825, reprinted in *New Harmony Gazette*, II (May 2, 1827), 241; Robert Owen, *Book of the New Moral World* (London, 1836), part I, iv; *Lectures on the Rational System of Society* (London, 1841), pp. 19-21.

77 Charles Fourier, *Le Nouveau Monde Industriel et Societaire* (Paris, 1829), p. xv, translated and used by Albert Brisbane as a motto in his periodical *The Phalanx* (New York, 1843), p. 2; Albert Brisbane, *Social Destiny of Man* (Philadelphia, 1840), p. 286.

which sleeps no moment on an old past, but every hour repairs herself, yielding us every morning a new day, and with every pulsation a new life?"⁷⁸

With the above desires was an effort by some to develop a complete society integrated within the highest ideals of Christian faith and ethics. Such reformers faced the problem of combining dynamic faith in human dignity with vitalizing institutions through which that faith would be stimulated toward full expression. Brownson pointed to the need for a "general doctrine which enables us to recognize and accept all the elements of Humanity." Said he:

If we leave out any one element of our nature, we shall have antagonism. Our system will be incomplete and the element excluded will be forever rising up in rebellion against it and collecting forces to destroy its authority.⁷⁹

Channing emphasized that the true spirit of brotherhood and peace can only be achieved by men understanding their relationship to God and the purpose of existence. Such knowledge would "revolutionize society," creating relationships not then dreamed of by men.⁸⁰

The Second American Revolution was thus marked by an all-consuming quest for a perfect society. Nothing less would do. As Ralph Volney Harlow explained, reformers of the day would not relinquish their major premise of perfectibility, but expended their energies searching for the true pattern of society. Consequently, numerous and varied schemes for making over the world were proposed and explored.⁸¹

The significance of this unquenchable desire for a perfect society, in preparing the stage for the introduction of Mormonism is apparent when it is noted that, in the Dispensation of the Fulness of Times, *all things* were to be gathered together in Christ and sanctified by His Spirit. Mormonism was not merely a religion, but a society. It was an all-inclusive plan of life, sufficiently comprehensive to care for every legitimate human need—the perfect way of life, patterned after the celestial society of

78 Emerson, "Man the Reformer," *The Dial*, I (April, 1841), 523-126.

79 Orestes A. Brownson, *New Views*, November 8, 1836.

80 See Parrington, *op. cit.*, II, 333.

81 See Ralph Volney Harlow, Gerrit Smith: *Philanthropist and Reformer* (New York, 1939), p. 100.

heaven. In its scope was the plan of the City of Zion, a model after which cities throughout the world were to be patterned. There was a system of economics founded in the maintenance of man's free agency and aspiring to the ideals of social union and equality, which would elevate man spiritually, culturally, and intellectually, while enriching him economically. Uplifting social principles were added to stimulate and enhance man's educational, recreational, and family life.

Significantly, the quest for a perfect society expressed itself in a communitarian movement where many sought either to find or to develop a model society that could be used as a pattern in reorganizing the world. This feature of the nineteenth-century reform movement made the prevailing idea of a total reconstruction of society unique when compared with the efforts of most former revolutionaries. Confident that once a true society was either found or developed men everywhere would imitate it, reformers devoted themselves to the development of model communities. Though often referred to as "utopian socialism," this movement is more appropriately called "communitarianism," because it emphasized the use of the model community as a precedent for the reform of society in all its parts.⁸²

Zion was considered to be such a model system—an ensign or standard to the nations. Kings and noblemen were to come to Zion and learn of her ways, that they might walk in her paths. A revelation indicates: "I have sent mine everlasting covenant into the world, to be a light to the world, and to be a standard for my people, and for the Gentiles to seek it."⁸³ The Saints were commanded to, "Arise and shine forth, that thy light may be a standard for the nations."⁸⁴ Before Zion could fulfill her destined role in the earth, the Saints were expected to develop her law, that "the kingdoms of this world may be constrained to acknowledge that the kingdom of Zion is in very deed the kingdom of our God and his Christ."⁸⁵

Paradoxically, the quest for a perfect society was associated

82 See Arthur E. Bestor, Jr., "The Ferment of Freedom," *Problems in American History*, ed. by Richard W. Leopold and Arthur S. Link (New York, 1952), pp. 321-22.

83 *Doctrine and Covenants*, 45:9.

84 *Doctrine and Covenants*, 115:5.

85 *Doctrine and Covenants*, 105:31-2.

with an ardent spirit of individualism and a burning zeal for social union—two incompatible ideals, except as united in Zion's covenant society. The existence of these two ideals simultaneously in the hearts of men presents a difficult situation for historians to explain. It was a day when the individual was the world. The perception of this ideal, said Emerson, was "a sword such as was never drawn before."⁸⁶ With it as a criterion old forms of society were weighed in the balance, and those found wanting were cast aside. Should the institution resent such treatment and threaten excommunication, the individual often acted first, and "in public and formal process" excommunicated the institution.⁸⁷ Presidents, legislators, judges, and people of prominence listened eagerly while new theories for reorganizing society in the individual's interest were expounded.⁸⁸ President Jackson considered it a divine call to work in the interest of the common man.

But while it was an age of individualists epitomized by the lives of Emerson and Thoreau, the world, in the words of the former, was "awakening to the idea of union."⁸⁹ Or, as Brownson declared, "Progress is our law, and our first step is UNION."⁹⁰ Channing said:

In truth, one of the most remarkable circumstances or features of our age is the energy with which the principle of combination, or of action by joint forces, by associated numbers, is manifesting itself. It may be said, without much exaggeration, that everything is done now by Societies. Men have learned what wonders can be accomplished in certain cases by union, and seem to think that union is competent to everything. You can scarcely name an object for which some institution has not been formed.⁹¹

Brotherly association was the guiding ideal of the communarians. Reformers in Europe and America were convinced that the demands of an advancing civilization would be co-

⁸⁶ Emerson, "Historic Notes," etc.

⁸⁷ Emerson, "New England Reformers."

⁸⁸ See Fred E. Haynes, *Social Politics in the United States* (Boston and New York, 1924), pp. 25-28.

⁸⁹ Emerson, "New England Reformers."

⁹⁰ Brownson, *op. cit.*

⁹¹ Channing, *Christian Examiner*, VII (September, 1829), 105-6. There was a similar trend in Europe. By 1831 there were some 300 co-operative stores in England. See Carl Wittke, *The Utopian Communist: A Biography of Wilhelm Weitling, Nineteenth Century Reformer* (Baton Rouge, 1950), p. 15.

operative in nature. "They were founded in love and in labor," said Emerson of the new associations. "They proposed. . . to amend the conditions of men by substituting harmonious for hostile industry."⁹² In the words of Brisbane, it would not be "through hatred, collision, and depressing competition; not through war, whether of nation against nation, class against class, or capital against labor; but through union, harmony, and the reconciling of all interests" that the world would be renovated and the "suffering masses of mankind" elevated.⁹³

Emphasis upon union was not considered a retreat but a step forward in social arrangements. Communitarians, as Bestor notes, seriously considered societies founded upon social union as the means of reforming the world.⁹⁴ Martineau, for one, declared that the possible application of the principles of cooperation to large classes of society was "the most important dispute, perhaps, that is agitating society."⁹⁵ Nevertheless, the value of these many communitarian schemes, as Emerson noted, was not to be found in "what they have done, but [in] the revolution which they indicate as on the way."⁹⁶ Men have largely forgotten the many community experiments that arose out of the prevailing urge for perfectionism and social union. But though Owen at New Harmony, Ripley at Brook Farm, and a hundred other reformers with like desires contributed little of lasting value for the historian to record, their efforts stand as a barometer registering the ideals that caught the attention of men and molded their thinking in that day. In this sense communitarianism prepared the way for Mormonism.

Social union, within the context of individual freedom, was a cardinal principle upon which the society of Zion was founded. There are no more lofty concepts of free agency and the dignity of the individual than those revealed through Joseph Smith. Yet a revelation emphatically declared: "If ye are not one ye are not mine."⁹⁷ Every man in the new economic system

92 Emerson, "The Young American."

93 Printed as a motto in Albert Brisbane's, *A Concise Exposition of the Doctrine of Association* (2nd ed.; New York, 1843), cover and title page.

94 Bestor, *Backwoods Utopias*, p. 3.

95 Martineau, *Society in America*, II, 57-8. See also I, x-xiv, xvii-xviii; II, 54-65.

96 Emerson, "The Young American."

97 *Doctrine and Covenants*, 38:27.

was to "deal honestly, and be alike among this people, and receive alike, that ye may be one."⁹⁸ Consider the words of John Taylor:

We are seeking to establish a oneness, and that oneness under the guidance and direction of the Almighty. . . . We consider that union is the great principle that we ought to cultivate, union in religion, morals, politics, and everything else. . . . then we shall grow, and prosper like a green bay tree. . . . This is what we are after, and when we have attained to this ourselves, we want to teach the nations of the earth the same pure principles that have emanated from the Great Eloheim.⁹⁹

A specific example of how the communitarian trend led men to accept the program revealed through Joseph Smith can be seen in the case of Sidney Rigdon and his associates. Before their conversion to Mormonism they organized a community known as the "Family," where all things were to be held in common. Isaac Morley was the dominant figure in the community; and his farm was headquarters for group activities.¹⁰⁰ Sidney Rigdon, however, placed the support of his pulpit behind the move and soon became "a champion for the restoration of Christian communism."¹⁰¹ In a "passage at arms with Mr. Campbell," some two months before he heard of Mormonism, a Campbellite source reported that Rigdon "introduced an argument to show that our pretension to follow the apostles in all their New Testament teachings, required a community of goods."¹⁰² Rigdon's effort to establish "the ancient communism as practiced in the Church at Jerusalem," said another source, resulted from "an earnest effort to restore the primitive faith and practice."¹⁰³ Said Lyman Wight, who had recently been converted to Rigdon's religious views:

I now began to look at the doctrine of the Apostles pretty closely, especially that part contained in the second chapter of

98 *Doctrine and Covenants*, 51:9.

99 J. D., XI, 346.

100 *History of the Church*, I, 146. Said George A. Smith of the name of this group; "It has sometimes been denominated the Morley family, as there was a number of them located on a farm owned by Captain Issac Morley."—J. D. XI, 3-4.

101 Chase, *op. cit.*, p. 37.

102 Cited in *ibid.*

103 Errett Gates and E. B. Hurlbert, *The Early Relation and Separation of Baptists and Disciples*, p. 75.

the Acts of the Apostles, where they had all things common. In consideration of this doctrine I went to Kirtland, almost 20 miles, to see Br. Isaac Morley and Br. [Titus?] Billings. After some conversation on the subject we entered into covenant to make our interests one as anciently. I in conformity to this covenant, moved the next February [1830] to Kirtland, into the house with Br. Morley. We commenced our labors together in great peace and union; we were soon joined by eight other families. Our labors were united both in farming and mechanism, all of which was prosecuted with great vigor. We truly began to feel as if the Millennium was close at hand; everything moved smoothly on till about the first of November [1830]. About this time five families concluded to join us in the town of Mayfield, about seven miles up the [Chagrin] river. They each owning a good farm and mills, it was concluded best to establish a branch there. Accordingly, I was appointed to go and take charge of this branch.¹⁰⁴

It was while Wight was moving to Mayfield that Parley P. Pratt, Rigdon's former associate, with Oliver Cowdery and others, arrived in the area bearing news of the new revelation to Joseph Smith. Wight reported that when the missionaries "brought the *Book of Mormon* to bear" upon the people, "the whole of the common stock family was baptised."¹⁰⁵

The effort of those in the Family to practice original Christianity, economically as well as religiously, had much to do with their conversion to Mormonism. Hayden noted that their acceptance of Mormonism "was paved by the common stock principle."¹⁰⁶ First they sought for a restoration of the ancient order of things. This led them to imitate the New Testament society in its economic practices. Finally, they accepted Mormonism as a literal restoration of the pure faith and practice. Having come that far, they were prepared to accept a revelation through Joseph Smith clarifying true Christian economic

104 Personal sketch of his life, by Lyman Wight, written to Wilford Woodruff enclosed with a letter dated at Mountain Valley, Texas, August 24, 1857. Wight kept a daily journal throughout his life, and from comments made in this account he obviously consulted it at the time of this writing. Original documents on file at the Church Historian's Office, Salt Lake City, Utah.

105 *Ibid.*

106 See Hayden, *op. cit.*, 174, 197, 209-218, 298. Those in this group "were daily looking for some wonderful event to take place in the world," said another writer caustically. "Their minds had become fully prepared to embrace Mormonism or any other mysterious 'ism' that should present itself."—Eva L. Pancoast, "Mormons at Kirtland," Unpublished Master's Thesis, Western Reserve University, May 1, 1929, p. 20.

principles. When the revelation on the Law of Consecration and Stewardship was given the Prophet reported: "The plan of common stock which had existed in what was called 'The Family,' whose members generally had embraced the everlasting Gospel, was readily abandoned for the more perfect law of the Lord."¹⁰⁷

The Law of Consecration and Stewardship was significantly different in principle from that arrangement previously espoused by Rigdon. The plan revealed through Joseph Smith reveals a natural affinity with the theology and philosophy of the *Book of Mormon*, while Rigdon's system was a common-stock program much like many other communitarian schemes of the day. The *Book of Mormon* contains a record of two groups organized in the same manner as the New Testament society, and indicates that they were founded upon mature individualism, where all members imparted "of their substance of their own free will and good desires" to the poor.¹⁰⁸ There was no common-stock principle there. Instead, each individual had control over his own property, but freely imparted of his substance that those in need might also enjoy the good things of the earth and become self-sustaining, independent persons, united in love by the spirit of the Gospel and by their mutual covenants with God. The Prophet stated specifically that he "did not believe the doctrine" upon which the Family was founded.¹⁰⁹ John Whitmer gave the following picture of the Ohio community, which also indicates that Rigdon's plan had little in common with the principles of Mormonism:

The disciples had all things in common and were going to destruction very fast as to temporal things, for they considered from reading the Scriptures that what belonged to one brother, belonged to any of the brethren. Therefore they would take each other's clothes and other property and use it without leave, which brought confusion and disappointment.¹¹⁰

107 *Times and Seasons*, IV, 368. The revelation mentioned above concerned other matters, as the law of the Church, besides the Law of Consecration and Stewardship.

108 Mosiah 18:28; Alma 1:26-31; IV Nephi; Mosiah 4.

109 *History of the Church*, VI, 32-3.

110 "Book of John Whitmer," *Journal of History*, January, 1908, p. 50. Whitmer was appointed Church Historian in November, 1831. Before Joseph Smith removed to Ohio, Whitmer was sent to preside over the early converts in Ohio and was therefore personally acquainted with them.

Whitmer's statement is substantiated by Levi Hancock's report on his first contact with the Family. Hancock had joined the Church immediately after the Mormon missionaries arrived in Ohio, and shortly thereafter went to Kirtland. Though he knew nothing of Rigdon's community at the time, his conversion to Mormonism was evidently taken by a member of the Family to signify that he had been accepted into their program. While visiting Isaac Morley's farm, he was approached by the said communitarian, who took his watch "and walked off as though it was his." Said Hancock:

I did not like such family doings and I would not bear it.¹¹¹

I thought he would bring it back soon but was disappointed as he sold it. I asked him what he meant by selling my watch.

"Oh," said he, "I thought it was all in the family." I told him

The minutes of a conference held at Winchester, Randolph County, Indiana, November 29, 1831, also reveal that distinctions existed between the principles set forth by Joseph Smith and the common-stock systems of the day. Two recent converts had come into some difficulty because they supposed, by reading the Acts of the Apostles, that early Christian "disciples had ought to or were privileged to live 'in common stock.'" They were corrected in their views, confessed their error before the Church, and were forgiven.¹¹²

The relationship of the Family to the Law of Consecration and Stewardship was strictly preparatory. The development of Morley's community reveals the existence of a powerful urge to reorganize society. Instead of having to stimulate such desire, Joseph Smith had only to direct it into appropriate patterns. Again the scene had been amply prepared for the principles revealed through him. Meanwhile, the converts had the responsibility of discriminating between those principles set forth by the Prophet and others espoused in the many systems of the day. And as may be expected some failed in this duty. Of these John Witmer said: "There were some of the disciples who were flattered into this church, because they thought that all things were to be common; therefore they thought to glut

¹¹¹ "Autobiography of Levi W. Hancock." Typewritten copy from the original, Brigham Young Library, p. 44.

¹¹² *Journey History*, November 29, 1831.

themselves upon the labors of others.”¹¹³ But though men in some measure failed to understand, God fulfilled His responsibility by preparing all things for the Restoration and its message, to the extent that the injunction could be repeated: “Say nothing but repentance of this generation.”¹¹⁴ Failure to repent and discriminate was a principle factor that kept men from embracing the program of the new Dispensation; in all other ways they were prepared for its law. The field was indeed white and ready for harvest.

¹¹³ Whitmer, *op. cit.*

¹¹⁴ *Doctrine and Covenants*, 6:9; 11:9.