

Restoring the Church of Christ

By March 26, 1830 5,000 copies of the Book of Mormon had been printed. Baptisms had been performed in May and June 1829, but no formal ecclesiastical organization had yet occurred.¹ In late March Joseph Knight drove Joseph Smith Jr. from Harmony, Pennsylvania, to the home of his father, Joseph Sr., and brother Hyrum in Manchester. Knight later recalled that on the way Smith talked about organizing a church:

Now in the Spring of 1830 I went with my Team and took Joseph out to Manchester to his Fathers when we was on our way he told me that there must be a Church formed But Did not tell when. Now when we got near to his fathers we Saw a man Some Eighty Rods Before us run acros[s] the Street with a Bundle in his hand. there Says Joseph there is martin [Harris] going a Cros [across] the road with Some thing in his hand Says I how Could you know him So far[?] Says he I Believe it is him and when we Came up it was Martin with a Bunch of mormon [mormon] Books he Came to us and after Compliments he Says the Books will not sell[.] for no Body wants them Joseph Says I think they will Sell well Says he [Martin] I want a Commandment Why[?] Says Joseph fullfill what you have got But says he [Martin] I must have a Commandment Joseph put him off But he insisted three or four times he must have a Commandment . . . in the morning he got up and Said he must have a Commandment to Joseph and went home. and along in the after part of the Day Joseph and oliver Received a Commandment²

The title of the revelation as printed stated: "A commandment of God and not of man to you, Martin, given (Manchester, New-York, March, 1830,) by him who is eternal."³ Knight stayed at the Smiths' residence a few days, waiting for more copies of the Book of Mormon to be bound.

As Joseph Smith had predicted to Knight, the "Church of Christ" was organized very soon thereafter—on April 6, 1830. Traditional accounts locate this meeting at the home of Peter Whitmer Sr. in Fayette, New York. No minutes of the meeting have survived, but the earliest accounts and supporting evidence suggest that the event occurred not at Fayette but in the Smiths' log home in Manchester.

The Book of Commandments, published in 1833, contained a collection of six revelations dated April 6, 1830, given to six individuals who attended the organizational meeting: Oliver Cowdery, Hyrum Smith, Samuel H. Smith, Joseph Smith Sr., Joseph Knight Sr., and Joseph

¹ Marquardt, *Joseph Smith Revelations*, 41; BC 9:17; LDS D&C 10:67-68; RLDS D&C 3:16; see also BC 15:1.

² Joseph Knight Reminiscences, CHL. See Jessee, "Joseph Knight's Recollection," 36-37. The distance of eighty rods equals 1,320 feet or a quarter of a mile.

³ Marquardt, *Joseph Smith Revelations*, 51; BC 16; LDS D&C 19; RLDS D&C 18 (March [26-31], 1830).

Smith Jr. These revelations were received, according to their headings, at Manchester. A round trip between Manchester and Fayette being fifty miles, it is unlikely the same six men could have attended an organizational meeting in Fayette on the same day. The revelations were first arranged and copied by Joseph Smith with the assistance of John Whitmer in July 1830 at Harmony, Pennsylvania, and later became chapters 2-27 of the Book of Commandments. Whitmer was later called to be church historian and copied revelations into his manuscript Book of Commandments and Revelations. On July 20, 1833, the press printing the revelations in book form was destroyed, but several of the yet-to-be-completed copies of the Book of Commandments were put together and used by early ministers of the church.⁴

In addition, all references in *The Evening and the Morning Star* before 1834 refer to the township of Manchester as the location of the church's organization.⁵ For example, the following account of church origins appeared in April 1833:

Soon after the book of Mormon came forth, containing the fulness of the gospel of Jesus Christ, the church was organized on the sixth of April, in Manchester; soon after, a branch was established in Fayette, and the June following, another in Colesville, New York. We shall not give, at this time, the particulars attending the organization of these branches of the church. . . . Twenty more [converts] were added to the church in Manchester and Fayette, in the month of April; and on the 28th of June, thirteen were baptized in Colesville. . . . In October, (1830) the number of disciples had increased to between seventy and eighty.⁶

As we have seen in previous chapters, the Smith home had become the center for many of the events associated with Joseph Smith's emerging religious vocation until the Smiths moved to Waterloo, New York, in the fall of 1830. William Smith remembered the organizational meeting as being in Manchester. Although William seems to be incorrect in some of his recollections, he mentions that his family "went to my brother Hyrum's house" in 1829 and that "it was in this house that the first conference [sic] of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints [sic] was held, on the 6th day of April, 1830, at which I was present."⁷

Joseph Knight Sr. was staying with the Smiths when the church was organized. A neighbor and friend of the family, Benjamin Saunders, said the "<Smiths> held meetings at their house." Saunders mentioned that he was present at the baptisms, and he probably would not have taken the trouble to travel to Fayette for the occasion.⁸

Early references refer to six founding members.⁹ As to the identity of the six members present at the foundational meeting, two early lists made in 1842-43 exist. It is possible that no actual roll was taken at the time, and the names on the lists have slight variations. Brigham

⁴ Marquardt, *Joseph Smith Revelations*, 3-7.

⁵ *The Evening and the Morning Star* 1 (March 1833):4 [p. 76] and 1 (April 1833):4 [p. 84], Independence, Missouri.

⁶ *Ibid.*, 1 (April 1833):4 [p. 84]; see also *Evening and Morning Star*, Kirtland, Ohio, reprint, April 1833 (published June 1836), 167.

⁷ William Smith, *William Smith on Mormonism*, 14.

⁸ Interview of Benjamin Saunders, 1884, 27, CCLA. See Vogel, *Early Mormon Documents* 2:138-39.

⁹ *The Evening and the Morning Star* 1 (Jan. 1833):1 [p. 57]; and 1 (March 1833):4 [p. 76].

Young, who was not present, wrote in 1843: "The names of thouse [those] present at the organization" on April 6, 1830 were Joseph Smith Sr., Orrin Rockwell, Joseph Smith Jr., Hyrum Smith, Samuel H. Smith, and Oliver Cowdery.¹⁰ Jonathan Turner in *Mormonism in All Ages* (1842), has essentially the same list as Young's except that Joseph Knight is mentioned rather than Orrin Rockwell.¹¹ By Knight's account, we know he was there, but he did not receive baptism on this day. The names mentioned in Joseph Smith's manuscript history of the church included Joseph Smith, Oliver Cowdery, Joseph Smith Sr., Lucy Smith, Martin Harris, and a member of the Rockwell family, Sarah Rockwell, Orrin's mother. It is unlikely that Lucy Smith or Sarah Rockwell would be counted as one of the original six though they were present. More likely, the six original members were Joseph Smith, Oliver Cowdery, Hyrum Smith, Samuel H. Smith, Joseph Smith Sr., and Martin Harris.¹² Years later, around 1858, several other lists were compiled reporting those baptized in May-June 1829 or having been present at the April 6 meeting.¹³

The revelation received by Joseph Smith during the founding organizational meeting itself (printed as chapter 22 in the Book of Commandments) was headed "A Revelation to Joseph, given in Manchester, New-York, April 6, 1830."¹⁴ This location was changed in later editions to Fayette. Hyrum Smith was told:

A Revelation to Hyrum, given in Manchester, New-York, April 6, 1830. Behold I speak unto you, Hyrum, a few words: For thou also art under no condemnation, and thy heart is opened, and thy tongue loosed; And thy calling is to exhortation, and to strengthen the church continually. Wherefore thy duty is unto the church forever; and this because of thy family. Amen.¹⁵

Circumstantial evidence places Hyrum Smith in the Palmyra-Manchester vicinity. He signed a note to Levi Daggett of Palmyra on April 7.¹⁶ As mentioned, others receiving revelations in Manchester the same day included Oliver Cowdery, Samuel Harrison Smith, and Joseph Smith Sr. Unlike the others, Joseph Knight's revelation exhorted him to "unite with the true church." He later wrote, "But I Should a felt Better if I had a gone forward But I went home

¹⁰ Brigham Young Journal, page with date of October 7, 1843, CHL.

¹¹ J[onathan]. B. Turner, *Mormonism in All Ages* (New York: Published by Platt & Peters, 1842), 22.

¹² William E. McLellin, ed., *The Ensign of Liberty* 1 (March 1847):2, Kirtland, Ohio. William E. McLellin includes Lucy Smith and Martin Harris in his list.

¹³ See Kenney, *Wilford Woodruff's Journal*, 5:239-40, November 18, 1858; copy of a statement dated August 11, 1862, in Manuscript History of the Church, Book A-1, between pages 36 and 37; see *History of the Church* 1:76 note; Diary of Edward Stevenson, entries for December 22, 1877 and January 2, 1887, CHL; Cook, *David Whitmer Interviews*, 11, 214; *Ensign* 10 (June 1980):44-45 and (October 1980):71.

¹⁴ BC 22; LDS D&C 21; RLDS D&C 19 (April 6, 1830).

¹⁵ BC 18:1-4; LDS D&C 23:3; RLDS D&C 21:2.

¹⁶ Nathan Pierce Docket Book, 1827-30, June 8, 1830, facing page 77, located at Manchester Town Office.

and was Bابتised in June with my wife and famileye."¹⁷ Knight later recalled details regarding the exhortations and instructions which were part of the activities:

On the sixth Day of April 1830 he Begun the Church with six members and received the following Revelation, Book of Covenants [1835 ed.] Page 177. They all kneeld down and prayed and Joseph gave them instructions how to B[u]ild up the Church and ex[h]orted them to Be faithful in all things for this is the work of God.¹⁸

The revelation to Smith instructed him to proceed with the first ordinations.¹⁹ He ordained Oliver Cowdery an elder, and Cowdery ordained Smith a seer, translator, prophet, apostle, and first elder in the Church of Christ. Cowdery became the second elder. Joseph Smith's ordination as prophet and seer was the highlight ordinance on the day of the church's organization. William E. McLellin, who visited Oliver Cowdery in July 1847, wrote: "While I was on a visit with O. Cowdery, during the past summer, I asked him, to what did you ordain Joseph on the 6th of April, 1830? He answered, I ordained him to be a Prophet, Seer, &c., just as the revelation says."²⁰

It was this context that the April 6 revelation gave directions to members of the new church regarding its preeminent leader: "Wherefore, meaning the church, thou shalt give heed unto all his [Joseph's] words, and commandments, which he shall give unto you, as he receiveth them, walking in all holiness before me: For his word ye shall receive, as if from mine own mouth, in all patience and faith."²¹ Members were promised that, if they obeyed, the gates of hell would not prevail against them, God would disperse the powers of darkness before them, and he would shake the heavens for their good.

At least four persons seem to have been baptized as part of the activities associated with the organization. Knight describes two of the four baptisms, the baptisms of Joseph Smith Sr. and Martin Harris:

I had Be[e]n there Several Days Old Mr Smith and Martin Harris Come forrod [forward] to Be Bابتise [Baptized] for the first they found a place in a Lot a Small Stream ran thro and they ware Baptized in the Evening Because of persecution they went forward and was Bابتized Being the first I saw Bابتized in the new and everlasting Covenant. . . . [T]here was one thing I will mention that evening that old Brother Smith and Martin Harris was Bابتised Joseph was fild [filled] with

¹⁷ Joseph Knight, *Reminiscences*, CHL.

¹⁸ Ibid. The revelation was section 46 in the 1835 D&C; LDS D&C 21; RLDS D&C 19. When published in the 1835 D&C, this document did not indicate where it was received. John Whitmer copied the revelation into the Book of Commandments and Revelations and recorded, "given at Fayette Seneca County State of New York" (p. 28). The location was corrected in BC 22 where the heading stated: "A Revelation to Joseph, given in Manchester, New-York, April 6, 1830" (45). The Manuscript History written in 1839 made the change to "Given at Fayette." Jessee, *Papers of Joseph Smith* 1:303.

¹⁹ BC 22:1, 13-14; LDS D&C 21:1, 10-11; RLDS D&C 19:1, 3 (April 6, 1830).

²⁰ William E. McLellin, ed., *The Ensign of Liberty* 1 (December 1847):42.

²¹ BC 22:2-5; LDS D&C 21:2-4; RLDS D&C 19: 1-2.

the Spirrit to a grate Degree to See his Father and Mr Harris that he had Bin with So much he Bast [burst] out with greaf and Joy and Seamed as tho the world Could not hold him he went out into the Lot and appear[e]d to want to git out of Site of every Body and would Sob and Crie and Seamed to Be So full that he Could not Live oliver and I went after him and Came to him and after a while he Came in But he was the most wrot [wrought] upon that I ever Saw any man But his Joy Seemed to Be full.²²

Lucy Smith's narrative is similar:

In the spring Joseph came up <and preached to us> after <Oliver got throu[g]h> with the Book. <My Husband and> and Martin H[a]rris was ba[p]tized. Joseph stood on the shore when his father came out of the water and as he took him by the hand, he cried out, Oh! my God I have lived to see my father baptized into the true church of Jesus Christ and <he> covered his face <in his father's bosom and wept aloud for joy as did> Joseph of old when he beheld his father coming up into the land of Egypt, this took pla<ace> on the sixth of April 1830, the d[ay] on which the church was organized.²³

Lucy does not mention her own baptism. But a neighbor, Cornelius R. Stafford, recalled that as a young man he "saw old Jo Smith, his wife and Mrs. [Sarah W.] Rockwell baptized by prophet Jo Smith."²⁴ Benjamin Saunders also recollected: "I was there when they first baptized. Oliver Cowdery did the baptizing. Old brother <Smith> was baptized at that time and I think old Mrs. Rockwell."²⁵ Martin Harris years later recalled that he was not baptized "untill the church Was organised by Joseph Smith the Prophet then I Was Bابتised by the Hands of Oliver Cowdery."²⁶

The place of these baptisms was no doubt Crooked Brook (now Hathaway Creek), a stream in the northwest corner of the township of Manchester. Crooked Brook ran north past the Smith residence toward Palmyra. Joseph Knight described it as a "Small Stream," which it still is.²⁷ According to a later newspaper account, the stream,

not more than si[x]ty feet from the highway, is the first Mormon Jordan, a little creek which the Smith boys dammed at Joe's request and made a pool in which

²² Joseph Knight Reminiscences, CHL.

²³ Anderson, *Lucy's Book*, 477. The 1853 edition of Lucy's book, but not the draft manuscript, reads: "On the morning of the sixth day of the same month, my husband and Martin Harris were baptized." Richard L. Bushman commented, "Lucy Smith said the baptism occurred in the morning, but Joseph Knight and Joseph Smith, Jr., placed it after the organizational meeting." *Joseph Smith and the Beginnings of Mormonism*, 237n4.

²⁴ Statement by C. R. Stafford in *Naked Truths about Mormonism* 1 (January 1888): 3. Mrs. Rockwell was forty-four years old. Her daughter Caroline (b. May 1, 1812 and baptized June 9, 1830) said, "My mother was one of the first Mormon converts." *Ibid.* 1 (April 1888):1.

²⁵ Interview of Benjamin Saunders, 1884, CCLA.

²⁶ Interview of Martin Harris by Edward Stevenson, September 4, 1870, CHL.

²⁷ Joseph Knight Reminiscences, CHL.

the first converts to Mormonism were baptized. It is a sing[i]n[g] meandering little brooklet about ten or fifte[e]n feet wide, with two or three feet of water standing in pools in the bends of the stream, but ordinarily the water is but a few inches deep.²⁸

A history of Ontario County describes the stream in terms congruent with the accounts of those who claimed to be present at the church's organization: "Crooked brook, of Mormon fame, runs through the northwest part of the town[ship of Manchester], and it was in the waters of this stream that the Mormons baptized their early saints. Dr. [John] Stafford, an old resident of the village of Manchester, was present at the first baptism."²⁹ John Stafford, oldest son of William, "knew the Smith family well, and was present at the first baptism, when old Granny Smith and Sally Rockwell" were baptized.³⁰ The Stafford and Rockwell families were residents of the township of Manchester and lived within a mile of the Smith home.³¹

In 1839, when Joseph Smith, with the help of scribe James Mulholland, compiled the opening portion of his history, he was more vague about chronology but seemed to confirm the other accounts: "Several persons who had attended the above meeting [April 6, 1830] and got convinced of the truth, came forward shortly after, and were received into the church, among the rest, my own father and mother were baptized to my great joy and consolation, and about the same time Martin Harris and A. [sic] Rockwell."³² James Mulholland wrote at the bottom of what would be pages 9 and 10 of the 1839 draft: "Father Smith, Martin Harris baptized this evening 6th April. Mother Smith & Sister Rockwell 2 or 3 days afterward."³³ On the next page was recorded: "Several persons who attended this meeting, but who had <not> as yet been baptized, came forward shortly after. . . . Among the rest Father Smith, Martin Harris, Mother Smith."³⁴ The manuscript version behind the *Times and Seasons* edition added to the last phrase, "among the rest My own Father and Mother were baptized to my great joy and consolation, and about the same time, Martin Harris and a [blank] Rockwell."³⁵ Later the name "Orrin Porter" was mistakenly added in the blank space by someone other than James Mulholland.

Joseph Smith's 1839 history was not the first account to change the place of the church organization to Fayette, twenty-five miles away. The May 1834 edition of *The Evening and the Morning Star* contains probably the earliest error in the heading of the "MINUTES of a Conference of the Elders of the church of Christ, which church was organized in the township of

²⁸ *New York Herald*, June 25, 1893. A photograph of Crooked Brook was taken by George Edward Anderson in August 1907; see Richard Neitzel Holzapfel, T. Jeffery Cottle, and Ted D. Stoddard, eds., *Church History in Black and White: George Edward Anderson's Photographic Mission to Latter-day Saint Historical Sites* (Provo, Utah: Religious Studies Center, Brigham Young University, 1995), 181.

²⁹ John H. Pratt, in Charles F. Milliken's *A History of Ontario County, New York, and Its People* (New York: Lewis Historical Publishing Co., 1911), 1:418.

³⁰ *Shortsville Enterprise*, March 18, 1904.

³¹ 1830 U.S. Census, Manchester, Ontario County, New York, 169-70.

³² *Times and Seasons* 4 (November 15, 1842):12, Nauvoo, Illinois. This and subsequent publications make Mrs. Sarah Rockwell's first initial an "A."

³³ Jessee, *Papers of Joseph Smith* 1:243n1.

³⁴ Ibid. 1:244.

³⁵ Manuscript History A-1:38; Jessee, *Papers of Joseph Smith* 1:303-304.

Fayette, Seneca county, New-York, on the 6th of April, A.D. 1830." This conference of elders was held on May 3, 1834. Also, in the 1835 Doctrine and Covenants the texts of five of the six revelations received on April 6, 1830, and originally published in the 1833 Book of Commandments were amalgamated into a single revelation and the references to the location were deleted.³⁶

Not all official accounts after 1834 reflected the error in location. In 1840 Orson Pratt prepared the pamphlet *Remarkable Visions* in which he stated that the church was organized in Manchester. In 1842 Smith used Pratt's pamphlet for the wording in a letter to John Wentworth. As published in the *Times and Seasons*, Smith's letter read: "On the 6th of April, 1830, the 'Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints,' was first organized in the town of Manchester, Ontario co., state of New York."³⁷ In 1844 this letter was used as a source for a history published by Daniel Rupp.³⁸ However, in 1848 the Manchester reference in Pratt's pamphlet *Remarkable Visions* was changed to Fayette to agree with Smith's history.³⁹ Nearly thirty years later, in 1876, the LDS Doctrine and Covenants included Fayette as the site of the church's founding.⁴⁰ In 1880 the error was canonized.

It is difficult to support the argument that the early references to Manchester may have been mistaken and that, on April 6, the church was in fact organized at Fayette. The question becomes, then, why the confusion and contradictions about the location? Joseph Smith's history betrays other anachronisms and conflations. After gathering "at the house of the above mentioned Mr [Peter] Whitmer" Sr., Smith recalled: "I then laid my hands upon Oliver Cowdery and ordained him an Elder of the 'Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints.'" In fact the official name of the church in 1830 was the Church of Christ. The name was changed to the Church of the Latter Day Saints in 1834 and finally to the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints in 1838.⁴¹

Memory often conflates events that were once separate and distinct. Events which occurred within days of the April 6 meeting at Manchester, and which demonstrably occurred at

³⁶ See Preliminary Draft to History, 1839, and Manuscript History A-1:37, in Jessee, *Papers of Joseph Smith* 1:241-42, 302-303. See also BC 17-22; 1835 D&C 45-46; LDS D&C 21, 23; RLDS D&C 19, 21. For early references to the church being organized at Fayette, see Stanley R. Gunn, *Oliver Cowdery Second Elder and Scribe* (Salt Lake City: Bookcraft, 1962), 267, deed made on May 5, 1834; Nancy Clement Williams, *After One Hundred Years* (Independence, MO: Zion's Printing and Publishing Co., 1951), 228-30, deed of May 5, 1834; Deeds in Geauga Deed Records, Book 24:100, Geauga County, Ohio, microfilm 0020240, LDS Family History Library; see also Book 18:477-81, microfilm 0020237.

³⁷ *Times and Seasons* 3 (March 1, 1842):708. This was later changed to Fayette. See *History of the Church* 4:538.

³⁸ I Daniel Rupp, *He Pasa Ekklesia. An Original History of the Religious Denominations at Present Existing in the United States* (Philadelphia: Published by J. Y. Humphreys, 1844), 407. See *History of the Church* 6:428.

³⁹ O[rsen]. Pratt, *Interesting Account of Several Remarkable Visions, and of the Late Discovery of Ancient American Records* (Edinburgh: Printed by Ballantyne and Hughes, 1840), 24. The change was made in one of the 1848 printings.

⁴⁰ See 1876 LDS D&C 21. The designation "at Fayette" first appeared in RLDS D&C 19 in 1952, probably based on the LDS D&C.

⁴¹ Manuscript History A-1:37; Jessee, *Papers of Joseph Smith* 1:302-303.

the Whitmer house in Fayette might have assumed greater importance in Smith's mind over time. In Fayette there was an increase in the number of baptisms, the Articles and Covenants of the new church were written and accepted, licenses for lay ministers to preach were issued, and the first three church conferences were convened.

One of the revelations given on April 6, 1830, a Tuesday, designated Oliver Cowdery to be "the first preacher of this church."⁴² On April 11, the first Sunday after the organization of the church, Cowdery delivered "the first public discourse," the Fayette branch of the church was organized, and Cowdery performed six baptisms. A week later, on April 18, another baptismal service was held at Fayette, where Cowdery performed seven baptisms in Seneca Lake.⁴³ The manuscript history lists no one baptized at Fayette who lived in the Manchester/Palmyra area. As the message spread, Almira Mack, the twenty-four-year-old daughter of Lucy Mack Smith's brother Stephen Mack, came from Pontiac, Michigan, about June 1830, and arrived at the Smith home in Manchester. Lucy said Almira "received the Gospel" and was baptized.⁴⁴

The next meeting mentioned in the history was the first conference of the church, which convened on June 9. For the first time, the Manchester and Fayette branches came together. A copy of the minutes reads: "Minutes of the first Conference held in the Township of Fayette, Seneca County, State of New York."⁴⁵ Smith read "The Articles and Covenants of the church of Christ." They were "received by unanimous voice of the whole congregation."⁴⁶ The Articles and Covenants were then submitted as a confession of faith. Members agreed that the statement reflected their beliefs, including the callings of Joseph Smith and Oliver Cowdery, the Book of Mormon, and what were to be the teachings and practices of the infant church.

At the Fayette conference, prospective members from Manchester Township were baptized. They were Jerusha Smith (Hyrum Smith's wife), Katherine Smith, William Smith, Don Carlos Smith, Porter Rockwell, and Caroline and Electa Rockwell (children of Sarah W. Rockwell).⁴⁷ Orrin Porter Rockwell was sixteen years old at the time of his baptism. In the 1820 Farmington and 1830 Manchester census records there is only one member of the Orin and Sarah Rockwell family in the age bracket of their son Porter. Consequently there is no "Peter" Rockwell who could have been baptized. These are the first baptisms of Manchester residents that can be documented as occurring in Fayette.

⁴² Marquardt, *Joseph Smith Revelations*, 61; BC 22:15; LDS D&C 21:12; RLDS D&C 19:3.

⁴³ Manuscript History A-1: 39; Jessee, *Papers of Joseph Smith* 1:304.

⁴⁴ Anderson, *Lucy's Book*, 478.

⁴⁵ Donald Q. Cannon and Lyndon W. Cook, eds., *Far West Record: Minutes of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, 1830-1844* (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1983), 1-2. Manuscript History A-1:41, has the date of the conference as June 1 as does "History of Joseph Smith," *Times and Seasons* 4 (December 1, 1842):22 and "Newel Knight's Journal," in *Scraps of Biography* (Salt Lake City: Juvenile Instructor Office, 1883), 52.

⁴⁶ Cannon and Cook, *Far West Record*, 1.

⁴⁷ Manuscript History A-1:42; *Times and Seasons* 4 (December 1, 1842):23, spells "Jerusha" as "Jerushee" as in the manuscript. The name Porter Rockwell was written in the 1839 draft history. See Jessee, *Papers of Joseph Smith* 1:246, 250. The manuscript history has the reading "Peter" Rockwell. This is a scribal error made by James Mulholland when copying from his draft history and should read Porter. *Ibid.* 1:309. William Smith correctly lists Porter Rockwell as being baptized on June 9, 1830. See *William Smith on Mormonism*, 16.

At the end of June, Smith and Cowdery were at Colesville, New York, to set up the church there. In the midst of opposition, Cowdery performed thirteen or fourteen baptisms and established the Colesville branch on Monday, June 28, 1830. Among those baptized were Joseph's wife Emma, and Joseph and Polly Knight.⁴⁸

Some historians have looked to David Whitmer, one of the three witnesses to the Book of Mormon, to substantiate the claim that the church was founded in Fayette, since he claimed to have been present at the meeting held on April 6.⁴⁹ However, a closer look makes clear that the events Whitmer describes as being in Fayette parallel most closely with what happened in meetings after the organization of the church. In 1887 Whitmer wrote:

Now, when April 6, 1830, had come, we had then established three branches of the "Church of Christ," in which three branches were about seventy members: One branch was at Fayette, N.Y.; one at Manchester, N.Y., and one at Colesville, Pa. [New York] It is all a mistake about the church being *organized* on April 6, 1830, as I will show. We were as fully *organized*—spiritually—before April 6th as we were on that day. The reason why we met on that day was this; the world had been telling us that we were not a regularly organized church, and we had no right to officiate in the ordinance of marriage, hold church property, etc., and that we should organize according to the laws of the land. On this account we met at my father's house in Fayette, N.Y., on April 6, 1830, to attend to this matter of organizing according to the laws of the land. . . . Now brethren, how can it be that the church was any more organized--spiritually--on April 6th, than it was before that time? There were six elders and about seventy members before April 6th, and the same number of elders and members after that day.⁵⁰

Whitmer's statement contains errors. He claims there were seventy members in the three branches of the church by April 6, 1830. However, the "Far West Record" has the number at the time of the first conference two months later, June 9, 1830, as only twenty-seven.⁵¹ Whitmer says there were three branches by April 6, but the Fayette branch was not founded until April 11 and the Colesville branch not until the latter part of June.

David Whitmer states that there were six elders. The only time there were six elders was after the founding of the Fayette branch. Two of these were Smith and Cowdery, who ordained each other at Manchester on April 6, and the other four—Peter Whitmer, David Whitmer, John Whitmer, and Ziba Peterson—all from Fayette, were evidently ordained in April and received

⁴⁸ *The Evening and the Morning Star* 1 (April 1833):4 [p. 84]; Manuscript History A-1:43; Jessee, *Papers of Joseph Smith* 1:311. "H. P. [Hezekiah Peck] and wife have been baptized, & are very strong in the faith." Letter to the Editor, *Brattleboro' Messenger* 9 (November 20, 1830).

⁴⁹ John K. Carmack, "Fayette: The Place the Church was Organized," *Ensign* 19 (February 1989):19; Jessee, *Papers of Joseph Smith* 1:242n2.

⁵⁰ David Whitmer, *An Address to All Believers in Christ* (Richmond, MO: Author, 1887), 33; emphasis in original.

⁵¹ Cannon and Cook, *Far West Record*, 3. The minutes state: "No. of the several members uniting to this Church since the last Conference, thirty-five, making in whole now belonging to this Church sixty-two." These minutes were copied from the original in 1838.

their licenses at the June conference, where Samuel H. Smith became the seventh elder of the church.⁵²

Edward Stevenson recorded an interview with David Whitmer in January 1887 in which Whitmer told him, "on the 6th of April 1830, 6 Elders were at Peter Whitmers, David's Fathers. 2 Rooms were filled with members about 20 from Colesville, 15 from Manchester Church and about 20 from aro[u]nd about Father Whitmers. About 50 members & the 6 elders were present [present]."⁵³ The earliest possible date when the Colesville church could have been represented at Fayette would have been the second conference in September.

Another indication that Whitmer was recalling a latter meeting is that J. W. Chatburn, who visited the Whitmers in the early 1880s, recorded that David Whitmer "said that he baptized fourteen in Seneca Lake, a few days before the Church was organized. I asked his wife [Julia Anne Jolly Whitmer] if she was present when the Church was organized on April 6th, 1830. She replied, Yes; and was a baptized member at that time."⁵⁴ The history of the church lists eleven people baptized on June 9 by David Whitmer, including his future wife Julia Jolly.⁵⁵

Whitmer also declares that the organizational meeting was for legal purposes so the church could hold property and officiate in marriages. The cover of the Book of Commandments agrees that the Church of Christ was "Organized According to Law, on the 6th of April, 1830." However well-intentioned this event was, no records of incorporation have been found in the Fayette or Manchester/Palmyra area for April 6, 1830 or any other date.⁵⁶ Ultimately, the meeting was more spiritual than legalistic.

A state law at the time specified how a church was to incorporate. The minister of a group was to post a public notice of the time and date for a meeting of the male members to elect trustees. The trustees were "to take charge of the estate and property belonging thereto, and to transact all affairs relative to the temporalities thereof." The congregation had to be notified "at least fifteen days before the day of election," and the notification was to be given for "two successive sabbaths or days on which such church, congregation or society, shall stately meet for public worship" before the day of election.⁵⁷

The Presbyterian congregation of West Bloomfield in Ontario County followed these specifications precisely: "Whereas . . . a meeting of the male members of the Presbyterian

⁵² Ibid., 1.

⁵³ Diary of Edward Stevenson, January 2, 1887, CHL, in Cook, *David Whitmer Interviews*, 214.

⁵⁴ *Saints Herald* 29 (June 15, 1882):189.

⁵⁵ Manuscript History A-1:42; *Papers of Joseph Smith* 1:309. The names of Julia Anne Jolly and Harriet Jolly were omitted when the history was published in 1842. See *Times and Seasons* 4 (December 1, 1842):23. The history mentions that David Whitmer performed a baptism in May 1830.

⁵⁶ The records in the counties of Seneca, Ontario, and Wayne have been searched but no record has been found of the incorporation of the Church of Christ on April 6, 1830, or any other date. Correspondence from the Department of State, State of New York, Albany, October 6, 1986, and February 23, 1987 to H. Michael Marquardt; research trip to New York in October 1986.

⁵⁷ *Laws of the State of New-York, Revised and Passed at the Thirty-Sixth Session of the Legislature* (Albany: H. C. Southwick & Co., 1813), 2:214. For acts to amend "an act to provide for the incorporation of religious societies," passed April 5, 1813, see *Laws of the State of New-York* (Albany: J. Buel, 1819), 34, and *Laws of the State of New-York* (Albany: E. Croswell, 1826), 34-35.

Congregation of West Bloomfield in the town of Bloomfield county of Ontario and state of New York convened agreeable to publick notice as directed by the statute in such cases made and provided at the Meeting House of said Congregation on the 31st day of May 1830.⁵⁸ Similar incorporations can be found in the Miscellaneous Records books of Wayne and Seneca counties.⁵⁹

Joseph Smith was not at Manchester or Fayette long enough to give legal notice to incorporate. When he and Joseph Knight were on their way to Manchester, Knight says Smith told him "there must be a Church formed But did not tell when." This was at most twelve days before April 6. Knight was still at Manchester when the baptisms occurred and Smith "Begun the Church with Six members."⁶⁰ Smith and Knight were not in Fayette at the end of March. David Marks, a Free-will Baptist evangelist, on March 29, 1830 "attended a meeting in Fayette, and tarried at the house of Mr. Whitmer." He saw two or three of Whitmer's sons, but Joseph Smith was not there.⁶¹

One early document states that the church was "regularly organized & established agreeable to the laws of our Country by the will & commandments of God." There are other early church licenses with similar wording.⁶² This language might mean that the church was organized according to the freedom of religion clause amending the United States Constitution in 1791. People were free to organize as a voluntary unincorporated religious society or church with no trustees. This is evidently what occurred on April 6, 1830. There were no known marriages performed in New York by ministers of the new church, no property that belonged to the church, and thus no compelling reason to organize according to the laws of New York State.

Certainly inaccuracies in both individual and community memory might account for the shift of the place of the church's organization from Manchester to Fayette. However, another intriguing possibility exists. The change in location may not have been inadvertent but part of a larger strategy for coping with the economic strains that plagued the church through the early

⁵⁸ Recorded June 1, 1830, Miscellaneous Records, Book D:23-24, Ontario County Clerk's Office, Canandaigua, New York.

⁵⁹ See the incorporation of the First Baptist Church of Lodi, recorded November 24, 1830, Miscellaneous Records, Seneca County Book B:426-27, Seneca County Clerk's Office, Waterloo, New York; and of the First Congregational Society in Marion, signed March 16, 1829; filed March 28, 1829, Miscellaneous Docket 1:45, Lyons, Wayne County, New York.

⁶⁰ Joseph Knight, *Reminiscences*, CHL.

⁶¹ *The Life of David Marks* (Limerick, ME: Printed at the Office of the Morning Star, 1831), 340-41. Marks wrote concerning selling the Book of Mormon, "Five thousand copies were published—and they said the angel told Smith to sell the book at a price which was one dollar and eight cents per copy more than the cost, that they '*might have the temporal profit*, as well as the spiritual'" (341, emphasis in original). See also "For the Morning Star," *Morning Star* 7 (March 7, 1833):177, Limerick, Maine. In an 1830 account, published shortly after his visit in March, he stated, "We went to Fayette & held one meeting." *Morning Star* 4 (April 28, 1830):1)

⁶² Manuscript of Articles & Covenants, Zebedee Coltrin Journal, CHL; compare BC 24:2; LDS D&C 20:2; RLDS D&C 17:19. Some of the early preaching licenses had wording such as the following: "This Church of Christ established & regularly organized." Licenses of John and Christian Whitmer, given June 9, 1830, original in the Coe Collection, Yale University Library. Also the priest license for Joseph Smith Sr., also given June 9, 1830. Joseph Smith Collection, CHL.

years of its existence. As we have seen, what is probably the earliest reference to Fayette as the location of the April 6 events appears in a heading in *The Evening and the Morning Star* to the minutes of a conference held in Kirtland, Ohio, on May 3, 1834. This conference was attended by Joseph Smith, Oliver Cowdery, Frederick G. Williams, Sidney Rigdon, and Newel K. Whitney, all leading elders of the church and members of the Kirtland United Firm. The minutes of that meeting report that it was decided that the church should be known by the name "The Church of the Latter Day Saints."⁶³ Perhaps after this conference the "Church of Christ" founded in Manchester, New York, became "The Church of the Latter Day Saints" founded in Fayette.

In the Book of Mormon, the simple title "Church of Christ" identifies the church as Jesus Christ's.⁶⁴ In 1829 Oliver Cowdery produced a document stating that the "Church shall be called The Church of Christ," and although other Christian churches before 1829 were similarly named, this name was confirmed in a revelation given on the day of its organization.⁶⁵

Before the change in name, church leaders were concerned about obtaining donations to pay for the debts of the United Firm, to commence work on the Kirtland Temple, and to provide funds for the forthcoming march of Zion's Camp to Missouri. In a letter from Kirtland on December 5, 1833, Smith wrote, "Our means are already exhausted, and we are deeply in debt, and know of no means whereby we shall be able to extricate ourselves."⁶⁶ On January 11, 1834 Smith and his associates prayed "that the Lord would provide, in the order of his Providence, the bishop of this Church with means sufficient to discharge every debt that the Firm owes, in due season, that the Church may not be brought [brought] into disrepute, and the saints be afflicted by the hands of their enemies."⁶⁷ Less than a month before the name and place changes, the United Firm was dissolved and separated into two firms, one in Missouri and one in Kirtland. Members of the firm in Kirtland were instructed to divide the properties among themselves.⁶⁸

Additionally, on May 5, the land designated for the Kirtland Temple was transferred to Smith and his successors in the office of the presidency of the church.⁶⁹ By 1835 the identities of

⁶³ *The Evening and the Morning Star* 2 (May 1834):160. See *History of the Church* 2:62-63.

⁶⁴ See LDS Mosiah 18:17/RLDS 9:49; LDS 3 Ne. 26:21/RLDS 12:13; LDS 3 Ne. 28:23/RLDS 13:36; LDS 4 Ne. 1:1, 26, 29/RLDS 1:1, 28, 31; LDS//RLDS Moroni 6:4.

⁶⁵ "A commandment from God unto Oliver," CHL; BC 22:14; LDS D&C 21:11; RLDS D&C 19:3. For various arguments favoring the name change, see Oliver Cowdery, *The Evening and the Morning Star* 2 (May 1834):158-59; 2 (June 1834):164-65; Letter of John Smith to Elias Smith, October 19, 1834, George Albert Smith Family Papers, Special Collections, Marriott Library; Thomas B. Marsh to Wilford Woodruff, *Elders' Journal* 1 (July 1838):37.

⁶⁶ In *History of the Church* 1:450. A copy of the letter is in Joseph Smith Letterbook 1:68, CHL.

⁶⁷ Joseph Smith, Journal, January 11, 1834, 45-46, CHL. Also in Jessee, *Papers of Joseph Smith* 2:19.

⁶⁸ Kirtland Revelations Book, 102-105, CHL; LDS D&C 104:19-59; RLDS D&C 101:3-10. See also Kirtland Revelations Book, 111, revelation dated Kirtland, April 28, 1834; Joseph Smith's diary, April 10, 1834, 71-72, also in Jessee, *Papers of Joseph Smith* 2:29.

⁶⁹ See, for example, the deed recorded in Geauga Deed Records, Book 18:478-79, Geauga County, Ohio; microfilm 0020237, LDS Family History Library. For some additional information on the Kirtland Temple property, see Ronald E. Romig and John H. Siebert, "The Genesis of Zion and Kirtland and the Concept of Temples," *Restoration Studies IV* (Independence, MO: Herald Publishing House, 1988), 122n52.

United Firm members were obscured by pseudonyms.⁷⁰ In a revelation received by Smith on April 23, 1834, shortly before the name and location change, he was instructed: "Therefore, write speedily unto New York, and write according to that which shall be dictated by my spirit, and I will soften the hearts of those to whom you are in debt, that it shall be taken away out of <their> minds to bring afflictions upon you."⁷¹

All of these actions may well have been part of a larger attempt to frustrate church creditors or to avoid lawsuits. Unfortunately, there are no known letters extant written by Smith between April 23 and May 5, 1834, when he left Kirtland for Missouri. The evidence is too sketchy to reach a decisive conclusion, but this is an area of research worth pursuing and suggests a plausible motive for changing the church's name and relocating its place of organization to Fayette.

Besides an April 1830 revelation copied by John Whitmer in 1831, the Fayette location was unheard of until 1834.⁷² However, Fayette was important as the site of the first three church conferences, and the log home and farm of Peter Whitmer Sr., should retain a fundamental historical and sentimental position in Smith's Church of Christ.

As mentioned there were baptisms performed in June 1830 into the Church of Christ in Colesville, New York. This branch was established there by Smith and Oliver Cowdery. The coming of the new church to the Colesville area occasioned a series of confrontations—between the state of New York and Joseph Smith, between the Presbyterian Church and the Church of Christ, and between the Coburn and Knight families.⁷³ These events were recorded by members of the newly founded church, by the minister of the Presbyterian Church, by one of the sisters involved, Emily Coburn, and by a judge at one of Joseph Smith's trials.

The family of Joseph Knight became the nucleus of the new church in Colesville just as the Smiths had been the nucleus in Manchester and the Whitmers in Fayette. And the Knights were at the center of difficulties erupting during the church's first summer in the area. The Knight family home and mill were located just across the Susquehanna River from the little village of Nineveh in Colesville Township. Joseph Smith had worked with Knight and others in the Colesville area while conducting his treasure-digging activities, and the Knights had helped Smith while he was working on the Book of Mormon.⁷⁴

⁷⁰ See 1835 D&C 75, 86, 93, 96, and 98.

⁷¹ Kirtland Revelations Book, 107; LDS D&C 104:81; RLDS D&C 101:13d.

⁷² Book of Commandments and Revelations, 28, in Jensen, Woodford, and Harper, *Revelations and Translations: Manuscript Revelation Books*, 26-27. The 1833 Book of Commandments corrected the location to Manchester, New York.

⁷³ The church account is recorded in Manuscript History Book A-1:43; Jessee, *Papers of Joseph Smith* 1:310-11. The account in Book A-1 may have been based in part on Newel Knight's recollections. Joseph Smith's 1839 journal records for the dates July 4-5: "Thursday & Friday (assisted by Br Newel Knight) dictating History." Joseph Smith, Journal, kept by James Mulholland, CHL; Jessee, *Papers of Joseph Smith* 2:326. Newel Knight's published account is found in *Scraps of Biography*, 54. For the experience of Joseph Knight, see Jessee, "Joseph Knight's Recollection," 38.

⁷⁴ Albert L. Zobell, Jr., "Writing Paper for the Book of Mormon Manuscript," *Improvement Era* 72 (February 1969):54-55.

After the first church conference in Fayette, Smith and Cowdery made their way to Colesville.⁷⁵ Oliver Cowdery preached at the Knight home on Sunday, June 27. Baptisms were to be performed that Sunday, but antagonists destroyed the dam erected for the purpose. On Monday, June 28, 1830, members of the Knight family and others were baptized near the Knight home, and the Colesville church began to take shape.⁷⁶

Among those baptized was Newel Knight's wife Sarah Coburn (known as Sally).⁷⁷ Newel had been a Universalist and Sally a Presbyterian. Sally's father Amariah Coburn was an accomplished musician and earned part of his living by giving music and vocal lessons in the town of Guilford, Chenango County, where the Coburn family had established its residence sometime before 1820. Sally had grown up surrounded by music and had joined the local church choir.⁷⁸ The Presbyterian Church of Harpursville in 1827 was nearest to her home but was eventually absorbed into the church at Nineveh, just across the river from where they lived.⁷⁹

A few days after Sally Knight's baptism, a young medical doctor, Abram W. Benton, a Presbyterian, swore out a warrant for Smith's arrest.⁸⁰ Smith's history records that "a young man named Benton, of the same religious [Presbyterian] faith, swore out the first warrant against me."⁸¹ Constable Ebenezer Hatch was dispatched south to Colesville to arrest Joseph and return him to Bainbridge for trial. Joseph Knight Sr. provided lawyers for Smith's defense and later recalled:

They made a Catspaw of a young fellow By the name of Docter Benton in Chenengo County to Sware out a warrent against Joseph for as they Said pertending to See under ground a little Clause they found in the [New] york Laws against Such things the off[f]icer Came to my house near knite and took him I harnes[s]ed my horses and we all went up to the villie [village] But it was So Late they Could not try him that nite and it was put of[f] till morning I asked Joseph if [he] wanted Counsell he Said he thot he Should. I went that nite and Saw Mr

⁷⁵ For problems in the Fayette area, see the letter of Rev. Diedrich Willers, June 18, 1830, Diedrich Willers Papers, Division of Rare and Manuscript Collections, Carl A. Kroch Library, Cornell University Library, Ithaca, New York. Published in Vogel, *Early Mormon Documents* 5:271-78.

⁷⁶ Knight, *Scraps of Biography*, 53-55.

⁷⁷ *Latter Day Saints' Messenger and Advocate* 1 (October 1834):12, Kirtland, Ohio, has the date of Sally Knight's baptism as June 29, 1830. Since the day of baptisms was a Monday, the correct date is probably June 28. See *Utah Genealogical Magazine* 26 (October 1935):147-48.

⁷⁸ Knight, *Scraps of Biography*, 47.

⁷⁹ From 1824 to 1830 the work at Nineveh declined, being without a pastor. In 1830 it emerged as the Bainbridge and Nineveh Presbyterian Church. J. S. Pattengill, *History of the Presbytery of Binghamton* (Binghamton, NY: Carl, Stoppard & Co., 1877), 16. None of the early records appear to have survived.

⁸⁰ According to records in the family Bible, Abram Willard Benton was "born July 16, 1805." He died on March 9, 1867, at Fulton, Illinois. His brief comments about Smith's 1830 Bainbridge trial appeared in "Mormonites," *Evangelical Magazine and Gospel Advocate*, New Series, 2 (April 9, 1831):120, Utica, New York, original periodical in Meadville Theological Seminary, Chicago, Illinois. See Vogel, *Early Mormon Documents* 4:94-99.

⁸¹ Manuscript History Book A-1:48; Jessee, *Papers of Joseph Smith* 1:318.

James Davi[d]son a man I was acquainted with. the next morning ther[e] gather[e]d a multitude of peopel that ware against him [Smith] Mr Davi[d]son Said it Looked like a Squaley [Squally] Day he thot we had Better have John Read [Reed] a prety good Speaker near by I told him we would So I employed them Both. So after a trial all Day Jest at nite he was Dismissed⁸²

Smith's history describes how he was "visited by a constable" at Knight's home and "arrested by him on a warrant, on the charge of being a disorderly person." "On the day following," the history continues, "a court was convened for the purpose of investigating those charges," where there were "many witnesses called up against me."⁸³

One of Smith's defense lawyers, John Reed, later recalled that they "had him arraigned before Joseph Chamberlain, a justice of the peace, a man that was always ready to deal justice to all, and a man of great discernment of mind." The case started "about 10 o'clock, A.M.," and "closed about 12 o'clock at night."⁸⁴

The bills submitted to the county by the constable and the justice at Smith's examination confirm the account in Smith's history. The bill of Constable Ebenezer Hatch "Dated at South Bainbridge July 4th 1830" reads:

To Serving warrant on Joseph Smith & keeping	
him twenty four hours	\$2=00
3 meals Victuel & 1 Lodging	=50
Suppoenyng 5 witness	62 1/2
	\$3=13 1/2
	75
	\$2.37 1/2

It is not evident why the costs were reduced by seventy-five cents, but the \$2.37 1/2 total, rounded off to \$2.38, was recorded next to Hatch's name in the "Supervisor's Journal," confirming that Smith was in fact arrested one day, held overnight, and tried the next day. It further shows that Hatch delivered five subpoenas to witnesses to take part in the hearing.

A second bill submitted by Justice Joseph Chamberlain for cases tried between June 1 and August 1830 includes the state of New York "vs Joseph Smith Jr a Disorderly person July

⁸² Joseph Knight, *Reminiscences*, CHL. The New York law Knight cited was part of the vagrancy law which regarded as a misdemeanor "pretending . . . to discover where lost goods may be found." *Laws of the State of New York, Revised and Passed in the Thirty-Sixth Session of the Legislature* (1813), 1:114.

⁸³ Manuscript History A-1:44; Jessee, *Papers of Joseph Smith* 1:312-13.

⁸⁴ John Reed's speech was given on May 17, 1844, and appeared in *Times and Seasons* 5 (June 1, 1844):549-50; this quotation is on page 550. See also footnote in *History of the Church* 1:94-96; 6:392-97. Our spelling of the name "Reed" comes from the 1839 draft of the Manuscript History; Jessee, *Papers of Joseph Smith* 1:253, 257; *Times and Seasons*; and bills from Bainbridge, New York, for the years 1826 and 1830.

1st 1830," supplying the exact date of the trial, July 1, 1830, a Thursday.⁸⁵ That the examination in this case was lengthy is reflected in the itemized listing of Chamberlain's costs:

oath on Complaint	6 [cents]
filing Complaint	3
warrant	19
Examination 1 Day	1[.]00
10 Subpoenis	60
Swearing 12 witnesses	72

This bill shows there were actually twelve witnesses, indicating that another constable served seven additional subpoenas. Chamberlain's expenses for six cases totaled \$11.74 for a three-month period. This amount was entered on the back of the bill and is recorded beside his name in the "Supervisor's Journal" under the Town of Bainbridge for the year 1830.⁸⁶

The earliest printed account of this hearing appeared less than a year later in the April 9, 1831, issue of the *Evangelical Magazine and Gospel Advocate*. It was dated at South Bainbridge, March 1831, and signed A. W. B. Dale L. Morgan, who uncovered this account, identified this individual as Abram W. Benton who brought the complaint against Smith. Benton related the Bainbridge trial as follows:

During the trial it was shown that the Book of Mormon was brought to light by the same magic power by which he pretended to tell fortunes, discover hidden treasures, &c. Oliver Cowd[e]ry, one of the three witnesses to the book [of Mormon], testified under oath, that said Smith found with the plates, from which he translated his book, two transparent stones, resembling glass, set in silver bows. That by looking through these, he was able to read in English, the reformed Egyptian characters, which were engraved on the plates.

Benton recalled an attempt to have Josiah Stowell admit that Smith had lied to him about his ability to locate buried treasure. Benton described the questioning of Stowell and his responses:

Josiah Stowell, a Mormonite, being sworn, testified that he positively knew that said Smith never had lied to, or deceived him, and did not believe he ever tried to deceive any body else. The following questions were then asked him, to which he made the replies annexed.

[Q] Did Smith ever tell you there was money hid in a certain place which he mentioned?

[A] Yes.

⁸⁵ These bills were discovered in 1971 in the dead storage in the basement of the Norwich jail, with the 1826 bills. Chamberlain's bill is now in the Office of the Clerk of the Board of Supervisors, Chenango County Office Building, Norwich, New York.

⁸⁶ If we could locate Justice Chamberlain's docket book, we might have a more complete record of the testimony of the witnesses, but the book's location, if it is still extant, is unknown to members of his family.

[Q] Did he tell you, you could find it by digging?

[A] Yes.

[Q] Did you dig?

[A] Yes.

[Q] Did you find any money?

[A] No.

[Q] Did he not lie to you then, and deceive you?

[A] No! the money was there, but we did not get quite to it!

[Q] How do you know it was there?

[A] Smith said it was!⁸⁷

The next witness, Addison Austin, testified that, at the very same time that Stowell was digging for money, he, Austin was in company with said Smith alone and asked him to tell him honestly whether he could see this money or not. Smith hesitated some time but finally replied, "To be candid, between you and me, I cannot, any more than you or any body else; but any way to get a living."⁸⁸

Joseph Smith's history adds the following testimony:

Among many witnesses called up against me [Joseph Smith], was Mr. Josiah Stoal [Stowell] (of whom I have made mention, as having worked for him some time) and examined to the following effect.

Q. Did not the prisoner Joseph Smith have a horse of you?

Ansr. Yes.

Q. Did not he go to you and tell you, that an angel had appeared unto him, and authorised him to get the horse from you?

Ansr. No, he told me no such story.

Q. Well; How had he the horse of you?

Ansr. He bought him of me, as an<other> man would do.

Q. Have you had your pay?

Ansr. That is not your business.

The question being again put, the witness replied, "I hold his note for the price of the horse, which I consider as good as the pay—for I am well acquainted with Joseph Smith Jr, and know him to be an honest man; and if he wishes I am ready to let him have another horse on the same terms."

Mr. Jonathan Thompson was next called up, and examined—

Q - Has not the prisoner, Joseph Smith Jr had a yoke of oxen of you?

Ansr. Yes.

Q. Did he not obtain them of you by telling you that he had a revelation to the effect that he was to have them?

⁸⁷ A. W. Benton, "Mormonites," *Evangelical Magazine* 2 (April 9, 1831):120. Josiah Jones wrote that, in the fall of 1830, "He [Oliver Cowdery] stated that Smith looked onto or through the transparent stones to translate what was on the plates." "History of the Mormonites," *The Evangelist* 9 (June 1, 1841):134, Carthage, Ohio. See LDS Mosiah 28:13; RLDS 12:18.

⁸⁸ Benton, "Mormonites," 120.

Ansr. No, He did not mention a word of the kind concerning the oxen; he purchased them, the same as an<other> man would.⁸⁹

Smith's account also adds Stowell's two daughters, probably Rhoda and Miriam, to the list of witnesses, and Benton included Joseph Knight and his son Newel.⁹⁰ Benton related that Newel "testified, under oath, that he positively had a devil cast out of himself by the instrumentality of Joseph Smith, jr., and that he saw the devil after it was out, but could not tell how it looked!"⁹¹

Smith's history indicated that he was "acquitted by this court."⁹² According to John Reed, one of Smith's attorneys, "the court pronounced the words 'not guilty,' and the prisoner was di[s]charged."⁹³

According to Joel K. Noble of Colesville, before whom Smith was brought on a similar charge the next day, July 2, Smith won his dismissal by appealing to the statute of limitations. Noble wrote, "Jo. was arrested examination had Jo. plead in bar Statute of Limitations."⁹⁴ The limitation on a misdemeanor was set forth in the *Laws of the State of New York*, which read:

all suits, informations and indictments which shall hereafter be brought or exhibited for any crime or misdemeanor, murder excepted, shall be brought or exhibited within three years next after the offence shall have been committed, and not after, and if brought or exhibited after the time hereby limited the same shall be void: *Provided however*, That if the person, against whom such suit, information or indictment shall be brought or exhibited, shall not have been an inhabitant or usually resident within this state during the said three years, then the same shall or may be brought or exhibited against such a person at anytime within three years, during which he shall be an inhabitant or usually resident within this state, after the offence committed.⁹⁵

Joseph Smith's opponents may have felt that, due to his absence from New York while in Pennsylvania, the statue of limitations had not been violated. Since New York law limited misdemeanor charges to three years, and four years had elapsed since Smith was originally charged in Bainbridge, the case was dismissed.

However, the opposition did not give up that easily. No sooner had Smith stepped out of Justice Chamberlain's court in South Bainbridge, Chenango County, than he was served another

⁸⁹ Manuscript History Book A-1:44-45; Jessee, *Papers of Joseph Smith* 1:313-14. Smith wrote to Oliver Cowdery in 1829, "I have bought a horse of Mr. Stowell and want some one to come after it as soon as convenient." Smith to Cowdery, October 22, 1829, Joseph Smith Letterbook 1:9, CHL. See Jessee, *Personal Writings of Joseph Smith*, 252.

⁹⁰ On Josiah Stowell's family, see William H. H. Stowell, *Stowell Genealogy* (Rutland, VT: The Tuttle Co., 1922), 230.

⁹¹ Benton, "Mormonites," 120.

⁹² Manuscript History Book A-1:45; Jessee, *Papers of Joseph Smith* 1:314.

⁹³ *Times and Seasons* 5 (June 1, 1844):550; *History of the Church* 1:95n and 6:394.

⁹⁴ Joel K. Noble to Jonathan B. Turner, March 8, 1842, Jonathan B. Turner Collection, Illinois State Historical Library, Springfield.

⁹⁵ *Laws of the State of New York, Revised and Passed* (1813), 1:187, emphasis in original.

warrant and taken a few miles south across the county line into Colesville, Broome County, where he was arraigned before Justice Noble.

Joseph Knight recalled: "Then thare was a nother of[f]icer was Re[a]dy and took him on the Same Case Down to Broom[e] County Below forth with. I hired Boath these Lawyers and took them Down home with me that nite the next Day it Continued all Day till midnite But they Could find no thing against him therefore he was Dismist."⁹⁶ Justice Noble expressed his disgust with the proceedings:

Jo was no Sooner Set on terifirma than arrested again, brought before me in a adjoining County only 6 miles Distant, trial protracted 23 hours the pros[e]cuti[on] was Cond[ucted] by a Gent[leman] well Skil[l]ed in [the] Science of Law, proof manifested by I think 43 Witnesses. . . . Jo. was asked by witness if he could see or tel[l] more than others Jo. said he could not and says any thing for a living. I now and then Get a Sh[i]lling.⁹⁷

The well-skilled attorney who conducted the prosecution was probably William Seymour, another Presbyterian, the "Lawyer Seymour" mentioned in Smith's history. He pursued Smith's money-digging past.⁹⁸ Newel Knight was called as a witness and described his testimony during this trial:

As soon as I had been sworn, Mr. Seymour proceeded to interrogate me as follows:

Question. - "Did the prisoner, Joseph Smith, Jun., cast the devil out of you?"

Answer. - "No, sir."

Q. - "Why, have you not had the devil cast out of you?"

A. - "Yes, sir."

Q. - "And had not Joseph Smith some hand in it being done?"

A. - "Yes, sir."

Q. - "And did he not cast him out of you?"

A. - "No, sir, it was done by the power of God, and Joseph Smith was the instrument in the hands of God on this occasion. He commanded him to come out of me in the name of Jesus Christ."

Q. - "And are you sure it was the devil?"

A. - "Yes, sir."

⁹⁶ Joseph Knight, *Reminiscences*, CHL.

⁹⁷ Noble to Jonathan B. Turner, March 8, 1842. John Reed mentioned, "The prisoner was to be tried by three justices of the peace." *Times and Seasons* 5 (June 1, 1844):551. Since no bills for this trial in Colesville have yet been found, we cannot verify this statement.

⁹⁸ Manuscript History Book A-1:46; Jessee, *Papers of Joseph Smith* 1:315. William Seymour had been a pioneer settler in Binghamton and after studying law moved to Windsor Township, next to Colesville. There he became an elder and clerk of session in the Presbyterian Church as well as a justice of the peace and town clerk. Returning to Binghamton, he became a county judge, a member of the U.S. Congress, and finally judge of the Court of Common Pleas. He died on December 28, 1848, highly commended by the Bar Association. *Binghamton Democrat*, January 2, 1849, 3.

Q. - "Did you see him after he was cast out of you?"

A. - "Yes, sir, I saw him."

Q. - "Pray, what did he look like?"

(Here one of the lawyers on the part of the defense told me I need not answer that question.) I replied:

"I believe, I need not answer you that question, but I will do it if I am allowed to ask you one, and you can answer it. Do you, Mr. Seymour, understand the things of the Spirit?"

"No," answered Mr. Seymour, "I do not pretend to such big things."

"Well, then," I replied, "it will be of no use for me to tell you what the devil looked like, for it was a spiritual sight and spiritually discerned, and, of course, you would not understand it were I to tell you of it."

The lawyer dropped his head, while the loud laugh of the audience proclaimed his discomfiture.⁹⁹

Joel Noble wrote, "a Mormon Swore in open court Jo. Smith cast a Devil out of him (M[ormo]n) and said how D[evil] Looked. Said Devil was a body of Light."¹⁰⁰ According to Smith's history, "The Court finding the charges against me, not sustained, I was accordingly acquitted."¹⁰¹ Newel Knight also remembered that "he was discharged."¹⁰²

George A. Smith, in a discourse given in 1855, repeated what he had heard from Emer Harris, an older brother of Martin Harris: "Forty-seven times he [Joseph Smith] was arraigned before the tribunals of law, and had to sustain all the expense of defending himself in those vexatious suits, and was every time acquitted. He was never found guilty but once. I have been told, by Patriarch Emer Harris, that on a certain occasion he was brought before a magistrate in the State of New York, and charged with having cast out devils; the magistrate, after hearing the witnesses, decided that he was guilty, but as the statutes of New York did not provide a punishment for casting out devils, he was acquitted."¹⁰³

"[T]hrough the instrumentality of my new friend, the Constable," continued Smith's history, "I was enabled to escape them, and make my way in safety to my wifes sister's house, where I found my wife awaiting with much anxiety the issue of those ungodly proceedings: And with her in company next day arrived in safety at my house."¹⁰⁴

In 1832 Justice Noble certified the testimony of Josiah Stowell who said that Joseph Smith told Stowell that in a certain hill was a golden Bible:

⁹⁹ Knight, *Scraps of Biography*, 59-60, compare Manuscript History, Book A-1:46; Jessee, *Papers of Joseph Smith* 1:316. See also Vogel, *Early Mormon Documents* 4:32-33, 55-56.

¹⁰⁰ Noble to Turner, March 8, 1842. A newspaper printed a portion of a letter written in 1830 which said, "we have seen none of their miracles here, except N.N. [Newel Knight] I heard say in meeting, that he had the devil cast out." Letter dated October 8, 1830, in *Brattleboro' Messenger*, November 20, 1830, as cited in Walker, *Dale Morgan on Early Mormonism*, 344.

¹⁰¹ Manuscript History Book A-1:47; Jessee, *Papers of Joseph Smith* 1:317.

¹⁰² Knight, *Scraps of Biography*, 61. W. R. Hine also reported that "Jo was discharged." *Naked Truths about Mormonism* 1 (January 1888):2.

¹⁰³ *Journal of Discourses* 2:213, March 18, 1855.

¹⁰⁴ Manuscript History Book A-1:47; Jessee, *Papers of Joseph Smith* 1:317.

That Smith, the prisoner, went in the night, and brought the Bible, (as Smith said;) witness saw a corner of it; it resembled a stone of a greenish caste; should judge it to have been about one foot square and six inches thick; he would not let it be seen by any one; the Lord had commanded him not; it was unknown to Smith, that witness saw a corner of the Bible, so called by Smith; told the witness the leaves were of gold; there were written characters on the leaves; prisoner was commanded to translate the same by the Lord; and from the Bible got from the hill, as aforesaid, the prisoner said he translated the book of Mormon; prisoner put a certain stone into his hat, put his face into the crown, then drew the brim of the hat around his head to prevent light—he could then see, as prisoner said, and translate the same, the Bible, got from the hill in Palmyra, at the same time under a lock and in a chest; and the prisoner, when looking for money, salt springs, hid treasures, &c., looked in the same manner; did not know that prisoner could find money lost, &c.; and that prisoner told witness after he was arrested in Bainbridge, he would not look for money, &c. any more; told witness he could see into the earth forty or fifty feet," &c.¹⁰⁵

Joseph A. S. Austin testified that he asked Smith if he could see "by looking in said glass, and wished a candid and true answer. Prisoner told witness frankly, he could not see any thing, and in answer, prisoner likewise observed to witness, any thing you know for a living."¹⁰⁶ Justice Noble stated, "Joseph Smith, jr., was discharged; he had not looked in the glass for two years to find money."¹⁰⁷

Against this backdrop of dramatic public conflict, the Knight family played out parallel tensions within the more private arena of their extended family. When news reached Emily Coburn in Sandford that her sister Sally was interested in joining the church of which Joseph Smith was the leader, Emily was doubtful of the report, "believing her to be of an unshaken mind and principle." Emily visited her sister "to try if possible to convince her of the error into which she had innocently been decoyed and deceived."¹⁰⁸

¹⁰⁵ "Mormonism," *New England Christian Herald* 4 (November 7, 1832):23, Boston, Massachusetts. This testimony comes from a copy of the minutes taken by Joel K. Noble and certified on August 28, 1832. Noble wrote, "The defendant was brought before me by virtue of a warrant on the 30th day of June, A. D. 1830." Whether Joseph Smith appeared first before Justice Noble on June 30 or the warrant was issued on this date is unknown. A number of activities were happening in close proximity to each other.

¹⁰⁶ Ibid., emphasis omitted. This is the same individual named Addison Austin mentioned in A. W. Benton's account. His complete name was Joseph Addison Spencer Austin (1796-1872). Austin was a resident of Colesville. He is buried in the Nineveh Plains Cemetery, Town of Colesville, Broome County, New York.

¹⁰⁷ Ibid., emphasis omitted.

¹⁰⁸ Emily Coburn's account is in her book under the name Emily M. Austin, *Mormonism; or, Life Among the Mormons* (Madison, WI: M. J. Cantwell, Book and Job Printers, 1882), 35-36 (cited hereafter as Austin, *Mormonism*). Emily was married four times. Her complete name was Emily Coburn Slade Finch Ward Austin. For her account, see Vogel, *Early Mormon Documents* 4:164-76.

Emily, who had recently joined the Presbyterian Church in Sandford had a special concern about her sister. On Emily's several previous visits to her older sister's home in Colesville, she had become acquainted with young Smith and his treasure-seeking activities which centered on Sally's father-in-law's farm. She recalled:

I had seen him two or three times, while visiting at my sister's, but did not think it worth my while to take any notice of him. I never spoke to him, for he was a total stranger to me. However, I thought him odd looking and queer. He also told his friends that he could see money in pots, under the ground. He pretended to foretell people's future destiny, and, according to his prognostication, his friends agreed to suspend their avocations and dig for the treasures, which were hidden in the earth; a great share of which, he said, was on Joseph Knight's farm.

According to Emily's recollections, Sally's father-in-law, Joseph Knight, shared in the money-digging excursions on his own land:

Old Uncle Joe, as we called him, was a wool carder, and a farmer; yet he abandoned all business, and joined with a number of others, to dig for money on his premises. While I was visiting my sister, we have walked out to see the places where they dug for money, and laughed to think of the absurdity of any people having common intellect to indulge in such a thought or action.

One story about the treasure-seekers' adventures stood out in Emily's mind:

In the time of their digging for money and not finding it attainable, Joe Smith told them there was a charm on the pots of money, and if some animal was killed and the blood sprinkled around the place, then they could get it. So they killed a dog, and tried this method of obtaining the precious metal; but again money was scarce in those diggings. Still, they dug and dug, but never came to the precious treasure. Alas! how vivid was the expectation when the blood of poor Tray was used to take off the charm, and after all to find their mistake.¹⁰⁹

In the years after these early encounters with Colesville folk life, Emily lived with her brother Esick Lyon Coburn. He had married a milliner, Hannah Jewell, from Philadelphia and subsequently moved to Sandford. There he pursued his trade as a tanner, and his wife opened a millinery establishment. About 1828 Emily began a two-year apprentice with her sister-in-law. As Emily began her third year of residence she was caught up in a religious excitement in the neighborhood. She joined the newly organized Presbyterian Church in Sandford.

¹⁰⁹ Ibid., 32-33. William G. Hartley wrote, "It is possible, although evidence is lacking, that the Knights had interest in money digging ventures, such as friend Stowell sponsored, and that their interest in Joseph's story about gold plates might have had a profit motive at first. But their devotion to Joseph Smith for the next two decades was religious, not commercial." *"They Are My Friends": A History of the Joseph Knight Family, 1825-1850* (Provo, Utah: Grandin Book, 1986), 22.

Sandford and Colesville had both been created in 1821 from the township of Windsor, which originally covered the entire eastern end of Broome County.¹¹⁰ The Presbyterian Church had been in the Windsor area since 1800, but the separate Sandford church was organized in the winter of 1829-30.¹¹¹ On February 1, 1830, Reverend John Sherer was commissioned by the American Home Missionary Society to serve the Colesville and Sandford churches for a twelve-month period, with three months' salary in hand and the next three months pledged.¹¹² Sherer, then thirty-nine, was a graduate of Andover and had been ordained in 1825. He had served a pastorate in Litchfield, New Hampshire, and was a member of the Oneida Conference before being assigned to Broome County. He arrived in the field in February; and after completing six months of labor, he reported to the New York office on the status of his work.

At its organization, the Sandford church consisted of five members and "as many more were examined and propounded for admission." By this he meant that five more were examined about their personal experience of conversion and their understanding of the gospel message of repentance and faith in Jesus Christ for salvation. "These," he added, "have been received since. At another communion Three have been added, at another one <by letter>; and there now stand propounded, three others. A few more it is hoped will unite themselves." He adds, "Thus a vine has been planted, where a dreary moral waste has long <existed>. This little Flock of Christ appear to be 'steadfast, unmovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord,' though opposed on every side."

Concerning Colesville Reverend Sherer wrote: "In Colesville every good object seems to be opposed by some. Yet even here, hope seems to be lighting up. There have been a few cases of conversion, since I came here, and now there is an appearance of seriousness on the minds of several. In a distant part of the society where for a few sabbaths past I have appointed meetings at 5 o'Clock, there begins to be some favorable appearances."¹¹³

Emily Coburn had been a new Presbyterian convert. She found her sister's religious enthusiasm more than a match for her own. "She was as firm as the everlasting hills in the belief of Mormonism," Emily wrote, "and seemed to have the whole Bible at her tongue's end. She was of the belief that God had again visited His People, and again set His hand, the second time, to recover the house of Israel." Sally warned Emily against condemning what she did not understand.

¹¹⁰ Thomas F. Gordon, *Gazetteer of the State of New York* (Philadelphia: T. K. and P. G. Collins, 1836), 362.

¹¹¹ The church was first organized as the North Branch of the Presbyterian Church of Windsor, and in 1812 it became a separate church known as the Colesville Presbyterian Church. It had its central meeting place on Cole's Hill, where Nathaniel Cole had built the tavern that gave the area its name. By 1820 there was a house of worship there. Pattengill, *History of the Presbytery of Binghamton*, 18-20. The General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) first listed the Sandford church in its May 1830 *Minutes*. The last time it appeared was in the May 1833 *Minutes*, after which it dissolved or was merged with another church.

¹¹² American Home Missionary Society (AHMS) Archives, "Fourth Report," 34, #321. All papers and correspondence of AHMS are housed in the Amistad Research Center, Tilton Hall, Tulane University, New Orleans, Louisiana.

¹¹³ John Sherer to Reverend Absalom Peters, August 20, 1830, AHMS Archives. Part of this letter was edited for publication and printed in *The Home Missionary, and American Pastor's Journal* 3 (November 1, 1830):143.

Emily, seventeen-years-old at the time, had determined it was useless to try to change her sister's mind, and she decided to return to her brother's in Sandford. Emily and the Knight family attended services at Sally's home on Sunday, June 27. Emily recalled, "The discourse was delivered by Oliver Cowd[e]ry, an elder of the Mormon church, and a witness to the gold plates."¹¹⁴ A message came to Emily that her brother Esick wished to see her in the grove some distance from the house:

I felt reluctant in granting his request, but through the advice of my sister I ventured to go. I at this time attempted to make plain to him the reason of my tarrying at my sister's, and I then believed he understood me perfectly. While in the midst of our conversation, who should come but the Rev. Mr. Sherer, pastor of our church in Sandford. He came and took my hand . . . holding it so long and firmly I thought it odd.¹¹⁵

Holding tightly to her hand, the pastor tried to move her down the lane to a spot where her uncle was waiting with a horse and buggy to take her back to Sandford. For some reason Sherer failed to mention this detail, and it was only gradually that she learned their real intent. At the time Emily felt Sherer's behavior seemed crazy, holding so tenaciously to her hand. She asked her brother to help her, but he refused, saying she would do well to listen to his advice.

At that point her sister Sally, accompanied by other Mormons, arrived at the grove. Sally rushed up to Emily and wrenched Sherer's hand from hers, yelling, "What are you doing with my sister? What are you doing with my sister?" Emily remembered her white face as she repeated these words. The confrontation proved too much for Sherer and her brother, and Emily slipped into the house while the others argued for about half an hour. Finally Sally and her companions returned to the house and once more were seated and quietly talking and singing when, Emily remembered, her uncle Harvey

rode up to the door on a white, stately, beautiful horse, and as he drew up he exclaimed, "You are happy now you have accomplished your purpose, and I hope you enjoy it; but this will not be of long endurance, let me tell you." "O, yes," said one of the [Mormon] elders, "you are an attorney, probably you will take steps in this matter, but not to-day." "Sir," said another Mormon elder, "you are mad; you look as white as the horse you are riding; to-day is the holy Sabbath, and you are a deacon; don't indulge in such a passion." Many hard words were used on both sides; and here the subject ended, by putting spurs to the white steed, under a two hundred and twenty [pound] burden, which seemed light and easy for the noble animal.¹¹⁶

¹¹⁴ Austin, *Mormonism*, 36. Joseph Smith's history records, "The Sabbath arrived and we held our meeting, Oliver Cowdery preached." Manuscript History A-1: 42; Jessee, *Papers of Joseph Smith*, 1:309. This appears to be the Sabbath service that both Emily and Joseph Smith's history refers to. Cowdery and Smith returned to Colesville in July 1830 to confirm those who had been baptized but they were prevented and had to leave because of persecution. (Jessee, *Papers of Joseph Smith*, 1:317-18).

¹¹⁵ Austin, *Mormonism*, 40.

¹¹⁶ Ibid., 41-42.

The matter did not end there. That evening, although it was dark and rainy, her brother-in-law spurred his horse on "through darkness, mud and rain, and dead of night" to her father's house in Guilford, some thirty miles away, where he obtained their permission to consult an attorney and seize Emily in her parents' name. Returning in the morning, he came to Emily and informed her that he now had authority to take her away. Emily replied that she would willingly have gone without all that trouble, if they had just asked her and provided some means of getting back. In fact, she had on her own concluded to return to her brother's, but Newel Knight had not yet found time or a team to take her. She returned to Sandford, where she was met with "sober faces and cold hands." Still she remembered that she managed to "choke down" her feelings. This incident appears in condensed form in Joseph Smith's history:

Amongst the many present at this meeting was one Emily Coburn sister to the wife of Newel Knight. The Revd. Mr. Shearer, a divine of the presbyterian faith, who had considered himself her pastor, came to understand that She was likely to believe our doctrine, and had a short <time> previous to this, our meeting, came to labor with her, but having spent some time with her without being able to persuade her against us, he endeavored to have her leave her sisters house, and go with him to her father's, who lived at a distance of at least some [blank] miles off: For this purpose he had recourse to stratagem, He told her that one of her brothers was waiting at a certain place, wishful to have her go home with him. He succeeded thus to get her a little distance from the house when, seeing that her brother was not in waiting for her, She refused to go any further with him; upon which he got hold of her by the arm to force her along; but her sister, was soon with them; the two women were too many for him and he was forced to sneak off without his errand, after all his labor and ingenuity. Nothing daunted however he went to her Father, represented to him something or other, which induced the Old Gentleman to give him a power of Attorney, which, as soon as our meeting was over, on the above named Sunday evening, he immediately served upon her and carried her off to her father's residence, by open violence, against her will. All his labor was in vain, however, for the said Emily Coburn, in a short time afterwards, was baptized and confirmed a member of "the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints."¹¹⁷

After Emily returned home from Colesville, a rumor came to the attention of her family that she too was planning to join the new church Sally attended. "I received daily visits from the pastor of our church, who gave me a prayer book and wished me to learn some of the prayers," she reported, "but I returned the book, saying I wished to be led and taught by one who said, 'Take my yoke upon you, and learn of me.'"¹¹⁸ Those words betray the pain and stubbornness of a strong-willed young woman.

¹¹⁷ Manuscript History Book A-1: 43; Jessee, *Papers of Joseph Smith* 1:310-11, compare page 251. The name of the church at this time was the Church of Christ but by the time Smith's history was written it was called the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints, which is what appears in the text. See Knight, *Sketches of Biography*, 54.

¹¹⁸ Austin, *Mormonism*, 44.

In keeping with the Presbyterian procedures of church discipline, a course of gospel labor was commenced. Patterned on Matthew 18, the first step in such labor was for an individual privately to approach the offending party and seek to restore that person. If this effort failed, one or two others were taken along for the second visit to assist in the reconciliation and to serve as witnesses in the event the matter had to be brought before the entire church.

The final stage in the process was lodging a formal complaint with the church and holding a public hearing. In Emily's case the complaint was lodged by officers of the church, including her own brother Esick Lyon Coburn.¹¹⁹ The formal complaint read:

To the Church of Christ, in Sandford:

WHEREAS, E[mily]. M. [Coburn], a member of said church, embraces a most wicked and dangerous heresy; and whereas, we have taken with her the first and second steps of gospel labor, without obtaining satisfaction, we therefore make complaint to the church of which said E. M. [Emily Coburn] is a member, praying that the brethren of said church would bring her to an account for her unchristian conduct; and, as in duty bound, your servants will ever pray.

H. M.

E. L.

B. S.¹²⁰

Looking back on the affair, Emily acknowledged that her attitude could have been "more pleasing, cheerful, delightful." Yet each of the three separate times they visited her to labor with her, she affirms that

I assured them I had no thought of joining them (the Mormons). This they did not seem to hear; and, to sum up the matter, their uncharitable actions drove me farther and still farther from believing in anything good. I was not yet eighteen years of age. My heart was stricken, and I could see no love manifested. In the advancement of time I perceived they still believed I intended joining that church, without listening to what I told them or trying to ascertain the truth in regard to it. They did not come to me in love and ask me to go with them to my brother's or my father's.¹²¹

The pastor continued to make his customary visits and eventually raised the matter of settling the complaint against her with the church. He informed her that there would be a meeting at the church the following day; and since the matter concerned her, he wished her to be present. "I did not intend to be obstinate," she recalled, "but my feelings revolted against it." Nevertheless she went and "as the meeting was expressly to the purpose of bringing me to an account," she

¹¹⁹ Ibid., 251. The initials E. L. on the complaint refer to her brother Esick Lyon Coburn (1803-90). It is likely also that the initials H. M. represent the uncle she elsewhere (25) refers to as H. M. C., Harvey Cobourn listed in the 1830 census of Sandford as living just a few houses from Esek L. Cobourn (63). This is also probably the "Henry" Coburn recorded in the 1825 Sandford census.

¹²⁰ Ibid., 43.

¹²¹ Ibid., 39.

stood before the church in her own defense. "I arose and told them the charges brought against me were incorrect," she reports, "and I was very sorry that so much hard labor had been done under false colors; but this I would say, for the satisfaction of the church, that inasmuch as I had been the means of so much dissatisfaction, I felt heartily sorry, and hoped that God and the church would pardon that mistake. This seemed to be all that was necessary, and they gave me the hand of fellowship, and here the trouble ended."¹²²

Peace was short lived. Sometime in late September or early October, when the trees in New York take on a kaleidoscope of color, Emily returned to her father's home in Guilford. There she and her sister Nancy Jane braided straw bonnets, enjoying the fall sunsets and the autumn-tinted trees. But the painful events of the summer still lingered in her mind. "Why did not my father come or send after me when he heard of my intention to join the Mormon church? Why did they give a power of attorney to disgrace and ignominiously drag away this poor child[?]" Such unanswered questions flooded her mind and rendered her feelings peculiar.

Still her religious views remained the same, and she continued to pray that her life would be spent in the service of God and that her example would lead many to Christ. Then one day in autumn, when "the outward world seemed in slumber," a thought came into her mind that her sister Sally, whom she had not heard from for "several months" would come within two hours. Her mother refused to accept such a premonition. Yet within a short time, Sally and her husband Newel arrived.

Even more startling than this presentiment was the willingness of her parents to let Emily return to the Knight farm in Colesville, where all the excitement had occurred. If this seemed inexplicable to Emily, it was even "more strange when, as if by some unknown power, I was baptized and confirmed in the Mormon church the next Sabbath after!" Such an intention had not entered her mind when she left her father's house, she confessed. All she could say in later reflection upon it is that she thought she was following her religious duty. Was it the utter confidence she had in her older sister's integrity, she wondered.¹²³ She herself looked back on that day in surprise. Whatever the motivation that led her to unite with the new Church of Christ it profoundly altered the course of her young life.

The consternation and sorrow resulting from Emily Coburn's baptism into the new Church of Christ can be seen in the letter of Reverend John Sherer written in November describing the events of the summer:

I will relate a circumstance that has given me pain. A member of the church in Sandford, a young female, has renounced her connexion with the church, and joined <another> in Colesville founded by Joseph Smith. This man has been known, in these parts, for some time, as a kind of Juggler, who has pretended, through a glass, to see money under ground &c, &c. The book, on which he founds his new religion, is called the "Book of Mormon". It contains not much, and is rather calculated to suit the marvelous, and unthinking. No man in his right mind can think the Book or the doctrines it contains, worthy of the least notice; yet there are a number who profess to believe in it. Since the church was formed, which was some time in July [sic], about twenty have gathered around their standard, and have subscribed themselves to be the followers [of] Christ; for they

¹²² Ibid., 47-48.

¹²³ Ibid., 57-58.

call themselves a church of Christ, and the only church of Christ. All professing christians who do not adhere to their system, they consider as formalists; "having the form of Godliness, but denying the power." They have pretended to work miracles, such as casting out devils, and many other things, too blasphemous to mention. — It is believed, however, they have [atta]ined to about the zenith of their glory in this place. Their books remain unsold; <except> here and there an individual, none will buy them. It is thought the greatest speculation, which they probably anticipated, will prove a losing business. May the Lord speedily turn their counsels head long, and deliver those, whose feet have been taken in their snare.¹²⁴

Meanwhile, at Fayette, in October 1830, the month after the second church conference, a minister named Peter Bauder spent a full day at the Peter Whitmer home. He spoke with Joseph Smith personally and published his recollection in 1834:

I called at P[eter]. Whitmer's house, for the purpose of seeing Smith, and searching into the mystery of his system of religion, and had the privilege of conversing with him alone, several hours, and of investigating his writings, church records, &c. I improved near four and twenty hours in close application with Smith and his followers: he could give me no christian experience, but told me that an angel told him he must go to a certain place in the town of Manchester, Ontario County, where was a secret treasure concealed, which he must reveal to the human family.¹²⁵

While staying in Fayette in November, Joseph Smith met nineteen-year-old convert Orson Pratt who wrote, "By my request, on the 4th of Nov., the Prophet Joseph inquired of the Lord for me, and received the revelation published in the *Doctrine and Covenants*."¹²⁶ Pratt later added: "I went into that chamber [in the second story of the Peter Whitmer Sr.'s home] with the Prophet Joseph Smith, to inquire of the Lord; and he received a revelation for my benefit, which

¹²⁴ Sherer to Rev. Absalom Peters, November 18, 1830, AHMS archives. See Vogel, *Early Mormon Documents* 4:92-93. Smith's history reported Newel Knight's experience with the devil as occurring in April or May 1830: "He saw the devil leave him and vanish from his sight." Manuscript History A-1:40; Jessee, *Papers of Joseph Smith* 1:306. Emily went with the Colesville church west to Ohio. From there she went on to the new Zion in western Missouri. She eventually settled in Nauvoo, Illinois, only to leave the church she had joined some ten years before.

¹²⁵ Peter Bauder, *The Kingdom and Gospel of Jesus Christ: Contrasted with That of Anti-Christ* (Canajohrie, NY: Printed by A. H. Calhoun, 1834), 36. One of the main focuses of Bauder's pamphlet was his understanding that Christian churches had throughout history lost the spirit of personal forgiveness and instead turned to domineering priesthood. Therefore, he found it important that he could find no such experience of personal salvation in his conference with Smith.

¹²⁶ "History of Orson Pratt," *Deseret News* 8 (June 2, 1858):62; also in Elden J. Watson, ed., *The Orson Pratt Journals* (Salt Lake City: Elden J. Watson, 1975), 9. See Marquardt, *Joseph Smith Revelations*, 94; BC 36; LDS D&C 34; RLDS D&C 33.

was written from the mouth of the Prophet by John Whitmer, one of the witnesses of the Book of Mormon.¹²⁷

When Pratt and his traveling companion, Joseph F. Smith, Hyrum Smith's son, visited David Whitmer on September 8, 1878, Pratt provided further insight into the way Smith obtained this revelation. In a letter written three weeks after their visit, James R. B. Vancleave reports asking Pratt about "his belief in the seer stone":

at Peter Whitmer Sr's residence he [Orson Pratt] asked Joseph whether he could not ascertain what his mission was, and Joseph answered him that he would see, & asked Pratt and John Whitmer to go upstairs with him, and on arriving there Joseph produced a small stone called a seer stone, and putting it into a Hat soon commenced speaking and asked Elder P[ratt]. to write as he would speak, but being too young and timid and feeling his unworthiness he asked whether Bro. John W[hitmer]. could not write it, and the Prophet said that he could: Then came the revelation to the Three named given Nov. 4th 1830.¹²⁸

David Whitmer stated that many of Smith's early revelations were received through the seer stone. He wrote, "The revelations in the Book of Commnadments [sic] up to June, 1829, were given through the 'stone,' through which the Book of Mormon was translated."¹²⁹ Smith received many of his revelations from July 1828 to June 1829 (when he was dictating the text of the Book of Mormon) by a stone placed in his hat—the same method he used in hunting for lost treasure.¹³⁰

Sidney Rigdon, a new convert from Ohio, met Joseph Smith the following month in December. He first heard about Mormonism early in November and received baptism on November 8, 1830.¹³¹ He was ordained an Elder by Oliver Cowdery in Ohio. Rigdon, with Smith, visited the branch of the church in Colesville.¹³² While there Rigdon evidently checked the docket books of both Joseph Chamberlain and Joel K. Noble. Reportedly when he returned to Ohio about February 1, 1831, he "with a great show of good nature, commenced a long detail of his researches after the character of Joseph Smith; he declared that even his enemies had nothing to say against his character; he had brought a transcript from the docket of two magistrates,

¹²⁷ *Journal of Discourses*, 7:311, September 18, 1859. See also *Ibid.*, 12:88, August 11, 1867; and *Ibid.*, 17:290, February 7, 1875.

¹²⁸ James R. B. Vancleave to Joseph Smith III, September 29, 1878, "Miscellaneous Letters and Papers," CCLA. See also Cook, *David Whitmer Interviews*, 239-40.

¹²⁹ David Whitmer, *An Address to All Believers in Christ*, 53.

¹³⁰ Joseph Smith's history records that eight revelations were received through the "Urim and Thummim" (seer stone in a hat) between July 1828 and June 1829. It is probable that all the revelations during this period were received through the stone as David Whitmer states.

¹³¹ Copy of letter of Oliver Cowdery to "Our beloved brethren," dated November 12, 1830, in a Newel Knight Journal, private possession. See Vogel, *Early Mormon Documents* 2:415.

¹³² The Book of John Whitmer as cited in Bruce N. Westergren, ed., *From Historian to Dissident: The Book of John Whitmer* (Salt Lake City: Signature Books, 1995), 8, 13, original in CCLA. Emily Coburn mentions a visit of Sidney Rigdon but places it at an earlier time frame in her account. Austin, *Mormonism*, 37.

where Smith had been tried as a disturber of the peace, which testified that he was honorably acquitted."¹³³

During the early months of 1831 the Smith, Whitmer, and Knight families together with many converts from New York would join Sidney Rigdon and others in Kirtland, Ohio, now the gathering place of the Saints at their new church headquarters.

¹³³ "Mormonism," *The Telegraph* 2 (February 15, 1831), Painesville, Ohio; reprinted in the David S. Burnet, ed., *Evangelical Inquirer* 1 (March 7, 1831):226, Dayton, Ohio; also published in Howe, *Mormonism Unveiled*, 113. Richard L. Anderson identified the article's author "M. S. C." as probably Matthew S. Clapp; see "The Impact of the First Preaching in Ohio," *Brigham Young University Studies* 11 (Summer 1971):480.