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# The Life and Thought of Mormon Apostle Parley Parker Pratt

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The Life and Thought of Mormon Apostle Parley Parker Pratt

by

Andrew James Morse

A thesis submitted in partial fulfillment of the  
requirements for the degree of

Master of Arts  
in  
History

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## ABSTRACT

In 1855 Parley P. Pratt, a Mormon missionary and member of the Quorum of the Twelve, published *Key to the Science of Theology*. It was the culmination of over twenty years of intellectual engagement with the young religious movement of Mormonism. The book was also the first attempt by any Mormon at writing a comprehensive summary of the religion's theological ideas. Pratt covered topics ranging from the origins of theology in ancient Judaism, the apostasy of early Christianity, the restoration of correct theology with nineteenth century Mormonism, dreams, polygamy, and communication with beings on other planets. For nearly fifty years after its publication, *Key to the Science of Theology* was one of the most widely circulated books within the Mormon community, serving as a model of doctrinal orthodoxy. This thesis aims to understand Pratt's book and his theological ideas, broadly, in their historical context.

Primary sources related to Pratt and his contemporaries, including other works by Pratt, Mormon missionary tracts, newspaper clippings, and theological writings by competing religions, help place Pratt's ideas within the larger framework of American religious and intellectual thought of the early to mid-nineteenth century. Pratt drew from non-Mormon sources to help explain the Church's teachings, at times appropriating ideas and rhetoric from elsewhere to bolster his claims about the superiority and universality of the Mormon message.

The first chapter of this thesis gives a biographical sketch of Pratt. It introduces key concepts in Mormon belief and how Pratt conceived them. Furthermore, the chapter

offers a philosophical take on Pratt's life as one motivated by an apocalyptic worldview. Chapter two draws upon Pratt's apocalyptic conscience to examine his eschatological ideas including a strain of early Mormon thought regarding theocracy. Pratt envisioned a world-wide theocracy coming at the millennium. Mormons, Jews, and Native Americans as ancient Israelites would all share in a world-wide order built around twin centers of power in the historical Jerusalem and a New Jerusalem to be established in North America. Chapter three looks at Pratt's cosmology and argues that his views of the universe, including other planets and beings, were influenced and framed by contemporary Spiritualism as a means of combatting the threat of Mormons leaving the Church for Spiritualist practices. The epilogue looks at changes made to the text of *Key to the Science of Theology* in 1915 by Church leader Charles Penrose. It places the text's republication within an ongoing battle between older Church leaders like Penrose and younger leaders such as John Widtsoe over what would constitute Mormon orthodoxy during the modernizing phase of the Church in the early twentieth century. Issues like evolution and polygamy took the forefront over eschatological and cosmological concerns.

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## PREFACE

The idea for this thesis came after a long search for some element of Mormon history that scholars had not already examined. I am not a Mormon but I am a great-great-great grandson of John D. Lee, the man who took the official blame for the Mountain Meadows Massacre of 1857. My interest in Mormon history sprang from my connection to Lee. For several years before sitting down to write this thesis I absorbed everything I could about the religion, especially its first fifty years. By the time I started thinking about a thesis Mountain Meadows seemed overdone, the early breakaway group the Strangites had been recently written on, and almost anything having to do with Joseph Smith had been analyzed into a perplexing mix of interpretations. I do not recall exactly when the idea for the following thesis actually hit me, but the topic seemed so transparent that I was surprised no one had bothered with it before. Parley Parker Pratt was, after all, one of the most important, ecstatic, and tireless thinkers and missionaries of the early Mormon Church.

A new academic biography of Pratt by Terryl Givens and Matthew Grow appeared in late 2011 and was the topic of much discussion on Mormon blog sites and in journals. Much of the talk centered on how Pratt's life was presented in the new book as well as older biographies and Pratt's autobiography. I was familiar with Pratt from general histories and a reading of his theological treatise *Key to the Science of Theology* (the 1915 edition). Even though I am a historian I have always been fascinated by theological ideas. Over the years I have come to realize that theology makes most sense within a given historical context rather than as transcending time and space (which it

certainly can). At some point I conceived of the idea of looking at Pratt's theological ideas in their historical context. The goal was to see how ideas and circumstances played off of each other and influenced Pratt's thinking and life, as well as those around him. Some historians argue that writing about theology is not history, perhaps because Americans have grown so accustomed to having an imagined separation between politics and religion. However, I could see connections between theology and history everywhere I looked in Mormon historiography. The resulting thesis is something I call theo-political history, though perhaps that comes up short. It is ultimately an intellectual biography of Pratt that goes beyond what has been discussed in other accounts.

This is not to suggest that scholars have not studied Pratt's theological ideas. They certainly have. I was fortunate that Pratt's ideas which struck the deepest chord with me were things that scholars had not yet examined. When I read the original 1855 edition of Pratt's *Key to the Science of Theology*, the central primary source for this thesis, I was impressed by its strong philo-Semitic attitude and apparent engagement with contemporary Spiritualism. The former seemed out of place in nineteenth-century American Christianity, while the latter seemed specific to the 1840s and early 1850s. These two topics became the focus of chapters two and three, respectively.

Pratt divided *Key to the Science of Theology* into seventeen chapters. The first half of the book is arranged chronologically. It begins with Pratt's definition of theology as an all-encompassing science and illustrates the ways in which this science had been given to the Jews and how they lost it over time. Pratt proceeds to show how the Gentiles (i.e., early Christians) had been given the science of theology by Jesus Christ along with

the Nephites in the Book of Mormon. Gradually, these followers of Christ in both the Eastern and Western Hemispheres lost the science just as the Jews had. Pratt next enters cosmological territory, describing the origins and destiny of the universe and the restoration of the science of theology in the early nineteenth century preceding the coming of the millennium. The second half of the book is arranged thematically with Pratt weighing in on such topics as miracles, angels, dreams, resurrection and the Mormon conception of heaven, and interplanetary communication. He closes the book with a chapter on marriage and procreation.

This thesis examines how non-Mormon influences, secular and religious, shaped Pratt's ideas and presentation, grounding *Key to the Science of Theology* in a well-defined chronological and broadly socio-cultural historical context. It places those influences into an early Mormon context through a focus on two of Pratt's main theological agendas: his eschatology and his cosmology. By eschatology I mean Pratt's vision of the apocalypse, the end of the current age of immorality and idolatry, and the beginning of a new age of harmony and a restored universal religion. Pratt's eschatology was grounded in a utopian ideal where the world would come to embrace a Mormon theocracy and live in absolute peace in the millennial reign of the returned Christ. By cosmology I mean Pratt's vision of the universe and the cosmos, including a nearly endless array of planetary systems, intelligent beings, and the underlying laws which govern them and give life its ultimate meaning. His cosmology made the universe one interconnected whole where beings with similar spirits (and sometimes bodies) inhabited and colonized

these endless planetary systems in a manner congruent with his notion of an earthly theocracy.

Chapter one introduces Pratt's life and his adoption of the Mormon faith. It touches on key events in his life which factored in the content of his various writings. This includes his missionary trips to Native Americans, his time in New York, England, California, and his foray into Chile during the early 1850s. The chapter places Pratt under the tutelage of Joseph Smith. It presents some of the metaphysical aspects of Smith's religious innovations that Pratt expanded and speculated about in his later writings. It also argues that Pratt lived an "apocalyptic life." Drawing from the ideas of Mormon philosopher James Faulconer, I present Pratt as having undergone a radical realignment of his life, an apocalyptic conversion so to speak, to live with the expectation of the millennial return of Jesus Christ as perceived by Mormon belief. In turn, Pratt used his literary skills and missionary zeal to entice others towards the same realignment in hopes of literally building the Kingdom of God on earth. Pratt focused his entire theology on forming people in God's image and keeping Christ at the center of experience rather than forming God to preconceived ideas that ran the risk of annihilating God from religion.

Chapter two examines Pratt's engagement with Judaism, Native Americans, and his presentation of a proto-Zionist eschatology and desire for a world theocratic order built around a concept of Mormon and Jewish harmony. The chapter's first part introduces nineteenth-century ideas of a genetic relationship between Jews and Native Americans. The chapter's second part details Pratt's specific ideas about theocracy.

These ideas stem largely from the pre-Nauvoo period of Mormonism, before Joseph Smith made public his innovative and largely controversial cosmological ideas about heaven, celestial marriage, eternal progression, and the exaltation of man leading to godhood. The chapter uses *Key to the Science of Theology* as its main primary source but also utilizes Pratt's 1837 treatise, *A Voice of Warning*, which dealt in large part with biblical (i.e., Old Testament) prophecy and history, including the Book of Mormon. The chapter's main argument is that Pratt sought to harmonize the relationship between Gentiles and Jews (which included Native Americans, as Pratt and many of his contemporaries believed) and view them individually as essential components in the fulfillment of the millennium. Furthermore, the chapter places Pratt within a proto-Zionist sphere of intellectual thought that sought to use politics as a means of returning Jews to Palestine.

Chapter three presents a largely circumstantial argument that Pratt directly engaged with Spiritualists of his era, particularly the thought of Andrew Jackson Davis. The ideas of the Spiritualists found a way into Pratt's cosmology as Pratt sought to keep Mormons from falling into apostasy. These ideas developed when Pratt was in California, San Francisco specifically, in the early 1850s. This was in the post-Nauvoo period of Mormonism, after, that is, Smith's cosmological innovations had been publicized via revelation and absorbed into Mormon thinking. The chapter examines similarities between Smith and Davis, as well as Emanuel Swedenborg, in order to illustrate how and why Pratt and other Mormons found in Spiritualist ideas a common thread. For Pratt there was danger in Spiritualism, even if some of its cosmological ideas

were similar to Mormonism, because it sought to free people from religious order – the very thing Pratt was trying to build. Using contemporary newspaper accounts of Spiritualist activity in California, examples of Mormon apostasy to Spiritualism, and the writings of Davis compared side-by-side with Pratt's, the chapter argues that for a few years in the 1850s Spiritualism was perceived by Pratt as an immediate and impending threat to Mormonism. It was enough for him to appropriate Spiritualist rhetoric into *Key to the Science of Theology* and to develop a cosmology grander and more orderly than Davis, in particular, had envisioned.

In researching this thesis I relied primarily on the theological writings of Pratt, Davis, and others between the 1830s and 1850s. In a few places, autobiographical accounts provided insight into the intellectual development of the historical actors. Some shorter tracts, lectures, and sermons provided clarity on theological positions as well as placing both the person and the idea in specific historical contexts that were not necessarily evident in larger works. Elsewhere, newspapers supplied historical context. In the case of Spiritualism in California, newspapers represent some of the most original sources of the entire thesis. Secondary sources such as biographies, journal articles, and topic-specific monographs provided valuable historiographical references. As evidence of a new era of historical scholarship, almost all of my primary sources and journal articles were obtained through the internet. The anonymous persons who have taken the time to make careful digital scans of antique books and upload them on websites such as the Internet Archive cannot be thanked enough. Due to time, travel, and monetary

constraints I have not sought out archival sources such as Pratt's personal letters. Future research in this area could provide fruitful insight into Pratt's thinking.

This thesis makes two important contributions to Mormon historiography. Chapter two examines a theocratic strain of early Mormon ideology, not the theocracy which Brigham Young would be accused of presiding over in Utah, but a millennial theocracy much larger than the Great Basin could contain. Pratt's ideas can help in understanding the modern Church's growth as a world religion. Chapter three recovers Mormon engagement with Spiritualism, which scholars have largely ignored. Examining Pratt's theological writings for their contemporaneous ideas and references, rather than simply the documentary historical record, provides, I believe, a deeper understanding of the development of Mormon theology in the nineteenth century. For Pratt, Spiritualism was an impending threat to Mormonism in the 1850s. Combatting this threat in writing offered an opportunity for both polemical showmanship as well as a continued program of religious syncretism that began with Joseph Smith. To my knowledge, no scholar has examined Pratt's explicit references to theocracy in any serious way (though the internet is full of conspiracy theories regarding supposed Mormon plans to take over the government). Nor have many scholars taken Mormon engagement with Spiritualism in the 1850s seriously, largely due to much of the evidence being circumstantial. When and where theocracy and Spiritualism do come up in scholarship they are mostly in passing. Brigham Young's Utah was never technically a theocracy, and scholars' use of the term is symbolic of Young's intent as a leader. Few Mormons actually left Mormonism for Spiritualism. The extent to which theocracy and Spiritualism were present in historical

events was, in fact, minimal. This thesis highlights these topics as intellectual problems for Pratt. As such, theocracy and Spiritualism were more important to Pratt's evolving theological development than they ever were to the lived experience of the average Mormon in the nineteenth century. They are examples of the hopes and fears of one of Mormonism's leading figures as he sought to make the religion relevant in the face of changing social, political, and spiritual circumstances. Pratt used theocracy and Spiritualism to test Mormonism's claims of universality and to develop these claims further than Joseph Smith had done.

## CHAPTER 1

### AN APOCALYPTIC LIFE: THE METAPHYSICS OF PRATT'S IDEALOGY

#### Introduction

In the preface to his *Key to the Science of Theology*, Mormon missionary Parley P. Pratt put his work into the context of technological advancement. He wrote, “[t]he present is an age of progress, of chance, of rapid advance, and of wonderful revolutions.”<sup>1</sup> Pratt was writing over 150 years ago, when “a new era has dawned on our planet and is advancing with accelerated force – with giant strides.”<sup>2</sup> His references to steamboats and the telegraph will take the modern reader back into the nineteenth century but the immediacy of his message remains. For Pratt there was something providential about advanced communication and the freedom to form the ideal (to him theocratic) society in the American West. His vision for the West (and the country, world, and universe writ large) was like a train leaving the station of opportunity; his *Key to the Science of Theology* was the stationmaster whistling “all aboard!” A sense of new beginnings, awe, and purpose pervaded its pages.

When Frederick Jackson Turner greeted the metaphorical train at its frontier destination in 1893 he declared the West closed. Pratt’s church, the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints (LDS), had just compromised its ideals in 1890, ending the practice of polygamy, one of the major tenets of Pratt’s vision. A quarter century later references to polygamy would be completely edited out of a new edition of Pratt’s book.

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<sup>1</sup> Parley P. Pratt, *Key to the Science of Theology* (Liverpool: F.D. Richards, 1855), xi.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, xi.

From Pratt to Turner the idyllic hopes of westward pioneers can be seen as engulfed in a process much larger and far less godly than Pratt and others might have expected. For Pratt's fellow Mormons the social and cultural conditions that initiated their migration to the West ultimately forced them into foregoing, for the time at least, the creation of a viable theocracy.

Pratt's 1855 text, *Key to the Science of Theology*, is regarded as the first comprehensive treatment of LDS theology. In many ways he simply placed the teachings of Mormonism's founding prophet Joseph Smith into a coherent whole. Considered in its entirety, Pratt's writings represent the culmination of early Mormon thought. Smith never set out to develop his theology to its fullest potential. He never put it all into writing, although he did hint that he knew more than he spoke aloud. It fell on Smith's peers, above all Pratt, to process and produce synthetic assessments of Mormon doctrine and to speculate on how it fit into a rapidly modernizing world.

Smith's story is well-known, found in nearly any book on the history of Mormonism and the Western United States. In the year 1820, at the age of 14 or 15, Smith had a vision (recounted at a much later date) where he saw and spoke with God the Father and Jesus Christ. In September 1823, Smith later claimed, he received a visit from an ancient Native American-turned angel named Moroni. Moroni informed Smith that hidden in a hill near his home in Palmyra, New York, were a set of golden plates upon which were scriptures containing the history and prophecies of America's early inhabitants, tribal off-shoots of ancient Israel known as Lamanites. The plates spoke of a post-resurrection visit by Jesus Christ to the American continent. A full seven years after

this so-called First Vision the angel Moroni deemed Smith ready to receive the golden plates. Beginning in 1828 and continuing intermittently for the next year and a half, Smith miraculously translated the contents into King James Version-style English. In late March of 1830 the complete translation was published as the Book of Mormon. On April 6 of that year the young prophet founded the church that eventually became known as the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints.

Over the course of his fourteen years at the helm of the LDS Church Smith added to the canon dozens of revelations, two more short books of scripture, and his own so-called translation of the King James Version of the Bible, in which he corrected, by revelation and seer stones, many supposed errors contained therein. Smith was assassinated in June of 1844, just as he was beginning to publicly teach many of his more radical ideas such as plural marriage, the plurality of worlds, and the process of obtaining godhood called exaltation. After his death it fell upon others to make sense of his often scattered sermons, revelations, and private pronouncements.

Parley Pratt was part of Smith's inner circle of leadership and as such was more privy to Smith's ultimate vision than most Saints. During his career as a Church apostle Pratt would, in writing, develop Smith's themes into reasonable and well-thought instructions, culminating in *Key to the Science of Theology*. For many years the book was considered the authoritative statement of orthodox doctrine.<sup>3</sup> Yet, Pratt's work, in its original undoctored presentation, goes far beyond the often semantic ambiguity of

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<sup>3</sup> Erich Robert Paul, *Science, Religion, and Mormon Cosmology* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1992), 112.

Smith's religious pronouncements. In Pratt's treatise, contemporary cultural and social influences abound.

### **A Biographical Sketch**

Pratt, a descendent of Puritan radical Anne Hutchinson, was born in 1807 to a farming family in Burlington, New York. Well aware of his Puritan and colonial heritage, he wrote:

My ancestors were among the early settlers of the colonies of Plimouth and Sea-Brook. The venerable pilgrim fathers who preferred the hardships, toils and dangers of a howling wilderness, to tyranny and oppression, and who planted the first germs of an Empire of freedom in this western world... descended from a race so illustrious; the blood of such nobility running in my veins.<sup>4</sup>

Pratt's youth was spent doing physical labor and attempting to satisfy an insatiable thirst for books. Around the age of twenty, after marrying his first wife Thankful, Pratt moved to Ohio and joined the Disciples of Christ, a Restoration church led by the charismatic Alexander Campbell, who preached a simple gospel of primitive Christianity. The congregation Pratt belonged to was led by Sidney Rigdon. At the age of twenty-three, Pratt converted to Mormonism shortly after the Church was founded in 1830, and he later brought Joseph Smith's version of the Restoration to Rigdon's congregation, which subsequently converted en masse. Smith put Pratt's zeal to use almost immediately. He sent Pratt as part of a missionary group to the Native Americans in New York and along the Ohio River just one month after he had been baptized. This mission's induction was later canonized as a revelation: "And now concerning my servant Parley P. Pratt, behold,

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<sup>4</sup> Parley P. Pratt, *An Appeal to the Inhabitants of the State of New York* (Nauvoo, Ill: John Taylor, 1844), 1.

I say unto him that as I live I will that he shall declare my gospel and learn of me, and be meek and lowly of heart. And that which I have appointed unto him is that he shall go with my servants, Oliver Cowdery and Peter Whitmer, Jun., in the wilderness among the Lamanites.”<sup>5</sup>

By 1835 Smith had established the Church’s permanent governing structure and Pratt was made a life-long member of its main body, the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles. In 1836 Pratt was sent on a mission to Canada where he converted future LDS president John Taylor from Methodism. During a number of trips across the border Pratt was accompanied by his wife Thankful. Up to that point the couple had remained childless, but Thankful became pregnant in 1836, and in March 1837 she gave birth to their only child, Parley Pratt, Jr. Thankful died the next day. Two months later Pratt married another woman, Mary Ann. She joined him on a mission to New York later that year. While there Pratt wrote *A Voice of Warning*.<sup>6</sup> This treatise was meant primarily as a missionary tool. It included sections on biblical prophecies already fulfilled and those yet to be fulfilled. Additionally, it introduced readers to the Mormon conception of the Kingdom of God, which included the Book of Mormon peoples as the origins of Native Americans, the Restoration of the Gospel as initiated by Joseph Smith, and a return of the earth to a perceived original state of purity and geological formation not unlike the later scientific concept of Pangaea.<sup>7</sup>

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<sup>5</sup> Doctrine and Covenants 32:1-2.

<sup>6</sup> R. Steven Pratt, “The Family Life of Parley P. Pratt: A Case Study of Mormon Plural Marriage,” in *Parley P. Pratt and the Making of Mormonism*, eds. Gregory K. Armstrong, Matthew J. Grow, and Dennis J. Siler (Norman, OK: The Arthur H. Clark Company, 2011), 46-47.

<sup>7</sup> This is the idea that the all the continents of the earth were at one time connected as part of one large supercontinent.

In 1838 Pratt took his new wife to the Mormon settlement at Far West, Missouri. At the time, persecution of Mormons was rampant, culminating in the violence known as the Mormon War. Pratt, along with other Church leaders, was arrested and put in jail, first in Independence and later in Richmond. During Pratt's time in jail, Mary Ann stayed with him. There, Pratt secretly wrote a history of the recent violence, and Mary Ann smuggled it out.<sup>8</sup> In 1840 Pratt was called to missionary work in England. While awaiting passage, Pratt visited Joseph Smith. At these meetings Smith introduced Pratt to the doctrine of eternal or celestial marriage, which did not yet include polygamy as a tenet.

In England, Pratt set up a printing press and published the first British LDS newspaper, the *Latter-day Saints' Millennial Star*. He also published Orson Hyde's travelogue of the first Mormon visit to Jerusalem and the Middle East. In April 1843, after two years in England, Pratt returned to the new Mormon settlement of Nauvoo, Illinois. Soon after Smith confided to Pratt the doctrine of plural marriage, which Pratt embraced enthusiastically. Over the next four years Pratt married seven additional women, including one who had not first obtained a formal divorce from her husband. This foreshadowed the troubles a decade later which would lead to Pratt's death. Although Pratt bragged that his domestic life was blissful, it placed stress on Mary Ann. When Pratt and the majority of other Mormons followed Brigham Young to the Great Basin in 1847 she did not join the trek. It was not until 1853 that the couple saw each other again.<sup>9</sup>

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<sup>8</sup> R. Steven Pratt, 48-50.

<sup>9</sup> Ibid., 50-64.

Young sent Pratt to England again briefly in 1847, but he soon returned and settled with his now large and growing family in Salt Lake City. Many of his wives were pregnant during the years 1848 and 1849. One of his wives gave birth to a son who died a month later. She subsequently left Pratt for California and was never heard of again.<sup>10</sup> In 1849 Young, by then the presiding prophet, unveiled a large scale missionary campaign for the Pacific. Envisioned as encapsulating both sides of the ocean, the missionizing focused on California, the Sandwich Islands, and Chile. Pratt was placed in charge of the Pacific missions.<sup>11</sup> In March 1851 Pratt traveled to California to fulfill his obligations as mission president. Along with two of his wives (one of whom was pregnant) and other missionaries, Pratt went first to Los Angeles. His companions on the trip from Utah included Charles C. Rich and Amasa Lyman, who became the leaders of the Mormon mission at San Bernardino. In Los Angeles Pratt attended a Catholic “Corpus Christi” celebration, which was his first major introduction to Catholicism.<sup>12</sup> Pratt apparently wished to familiarize himself with the Catholic faith, the religion of the Chileans who worked the mines in California. Pratt then traveled with Rich and Lyman to San Francisco in June 1851.<sup>13</sup>

In San Francisco Pratt engaged in street preaching. He met the entrepreneurial Mormon newspaper publisher Samuel Brannan, which ended in Brannan’s excommunication following the violence of the Vigilance Committee. In the late 1840s

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<sup>10</sup> R. Steven Pratt, 67-72.

<sup>11</sup> Terryl L. Givens and Matthew J. Grow, *Parley P. Pratt: The Apostle Paul of Mormonism* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011), 290.

<sup>12</sup> *Ibid.*, 297.

<sup>13</sup> A. Delbert Palmer and Mark L. Grover, “Hoping to Establish a Presence: Parley P. Pratt’s 1851 Mission to Chile,” *BYU Studies* 38, no. 4 (1999): 116.

Brannan had arrived by ship in what was then called Yerba Buena with a group of Mormons from New York. In the mid-1840s Brannan had worked with Pratt on LDS newspapers in New York (eventually changing the publications to be more secular in nature; part of Brannan's long process of distancing himself from Mormonism). Brannan had a reputation for defying Brigham Young (who refused Brannan's call to settle the Mormons in California, opting instead for the Great Basin, a long-standing point of contention between the two), and Young had disfellowshipped Brannan from the Church in 1845 for an unsanctioned polygamous marriage. Pratt intervened and Brannan was restored to membership, but Pratt would later come to regret his decision to come to Brannan's defense.<sup>14</sup>

Upon arriving in California Brannan set up a newspaper, the *California Star*, in which he announced the discovery of gold at Sutter's Mill, setting off the Gold Rush. Along with his various business pursuits, Brannan also took forays into vigilante justice. An early example was in 1849, when Brannan came to the defense of Chilean immigrant workers who had been victims of nativist riots.<sup>15</sup> Similarly, in June 1851, just a month before Pratt arrived in San Francisco, Brannan helped organize San Francisco's first formal Vigilance Committee. Pratt excommunicated Brannan on September 1, 1851, on the grounds that Brannan had collected tithes from California Saints and withheld them from Young and for his role in the Vigilance Committee. The specific charges included "unchristianlike conduct" and conspiring to "commit murders."<sup>16</sup>

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<sup>14</sup> Will Bagley, *Scoundrel's Tale: The Samuel Brannan Papers* (Logan, UT: Utah State University Press, 1999), 59, 297.

<sup>15</sup> *Ibid.*, 312.

<sup>16</sup> *Ibid.*, 297.

In September 1851 Pratt, his wives, and missionary companion Rufus C. Allen sailed from San Francisco to Chile on a cargo ship where they were the only passengers.<sup>17</sup> Pratt's venture to Chile had not been decided before he left Utah and was likely influenced by a couple of factors. First, in San Francisco Pratt observed or heard about thousands of Chileans who had come to work the gold mines. These migrant workers were among those whom Brannan had sought to protect informally and formally in 1849 and 1851.<sup>18</sup> Second, Chile was where many nineteenth-century Mormons, including Pratt and Joseph Smith, believed the Book of Mormon peoples, the Nephites, had originally landed.<sup>19</sup> According to Pratt in *Key to the Science of Theology*, "after wandering for eight years in the wilderness of Arabia, [the Nephites] came to the sea coast, built a vessel, obtained from the Lord a compass to guide them on the way, and finally landed in safety on the coast of what is now called Chili [sic], in South America."<sup>20</sup>

After arriving in Valparaiso in November 1851, Pratt spent an unfruitful five months lingering in a Catholic-dominated climate that allowed little in the way of legal rights to proselytizers of other faiths. Economic conditions resulting in inflation as well as the return of miners from California meant that competition for jobs was high. Chile was also in the midst of a civil war. To make matters worse, several weeks into their stay Pratt's pregnant wife gave birth to a son who died five weeks later.<sup>21</sup>

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<sup>17</sup> Palmer and Grover, 120.

<sup>18</sup> Givens and Grow, 298.

<sup>19</sup> *Ibid.*, 303.

<sup>20</sup> Pratt, *Key to Theology*, 22-23.

<sup>21</sup> Palmer and Grover, 120-126.

Pratt's return to San Francisco from Chile in March 1852 was physically, emotionally, and spiritually stressful. Ocean currents stalled the ship for days at a time, low provisions, potential starvation, and threats of cannibalism terrified one of his wives. Pratt and company finally arrived in San Francisco in May 1852. Pratt immediately set out to raise funds to return to Utah, and by October 1852 he was back at home.<sup>22</sup> There he spent eighteen months in a stationary domestic setting, perhaps for the only real time in his life. In 1853 Pratt's estranged wife Mary Ann finally came to Utah, and he tried to reconcile with her. Though she settled near Pratt and allowed him to see their children, Mary Ann divorced Pratt, ending his last link to monogamy.<sup>23</sup> In 1854 Pratt began work on an autobiography, took another plural wife, and was called back to San Francisco. There he engaged in editorial debates in local newspapers and was ridiculed in return. Between 1851 and 1856 San Francisco was plagued by violence and unrest that culminated in the Second Vigilance Committee. The widespread perception of chaos in the city informed Pratt's thinking about his ideal society. He would answer the violence and unrest with a vision of order and civility that he claimed only Mormonism could provide.

In 1857 Pratt was murdered in Arkansas by the jealous husband of a woman he had converted during his second residence in San Francisco. The woman, Eleanor McLean, had left her husband, Hector, for Pratt without first securing a divorce. In 1855 she became one of Pratt's plural wives. She then returned to New Orleans to retrieve her children, whom Hector had sent there when Eleanor became involved with Mormonism.

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<sup>22</sup> Palmer and Grover, 129.

<sup>23</sup> R. Steven Pratt, 75.

Failing to obtain her children, she returned again with Pratt in 1857, which led to Pratt's demise. After a court appearance at which Hector threatened to kill Pratt on the spot, the judge let him escape through the night. Hector found out and with the help of a mob tracked Pratt down and shot him at close range.

Scholar Patrick Q. Mason explains Pratt's murder within the context of Southern honor culture and the practice of extralegal violence prevalent at the time. He argues that Pratt's presence right from the beginning offended Hector McLean's sense of honor and that Pratt's religion was seen as undermining Christian and Victorian notions of social order, sometimes referred to as the cult of domesticity. In the eyes of Hector McLean honor and order could be restored only through Pratt's death. One of the unwritten laws of the time stipulated that a husband had a right to inflict violence if he caught the couple in a sexual act; in Pratt's case it was implied because of his extralegal marriage to Eleanor.<sup>24</sup> Other scholars, such as Will Bagley, have suggested that furor and grief over the loss of Pratt was a factor in the Mormon-led slaughter of a wagon train (which included people from Arkansas) on September 11, 1857, in Southern Utah, an event known as the Mountain Meadows Massacre. Still others, like LDS scholar Richard Turley, have argued that the link between Pratt's murder and the massacre was first perpetuated by California newspapers several months after the massacre and, ultimately, was only one of many factors that led to the event.<sup>25</sup>

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<sup>24</sup> Patrick Q. Mason, "Honor, the Unwritten Law and Extralegal Violence: Contextualizing Parley Pratt's Murder," in *Parley Pratt and the Making of Mormonism*, eds. Armstrong, Grow, and Siler, 245-273.

<sup>25</sup> Richard E. Turley, Jr., "The Murder of Parley P. Pratt and the Mountain Meadows Massacre," in *Parley Pratt and the Making of Mormonism*, eds. Gregory, Grow, and Siler, 297-313.

At the time of his death Pratt was barely fifty years old. Over the course of the last twenty-two of those he had been engaged in literary productions of one kind or another. These included writings on Church doctrine, theology, and history as well as poetry and prose. His literary output was what he was most known for. One list of his works puts the total at thirty-one.<sup>26</sup> His earliest publications appeared in 1835, a short pamphlet and a collection of poetry and hymns titled *The Millennium, a poem*. 1837 saw the publication of *A Voice of Warning*. In 1840 Pratt published no less than ten works including two longer histories of Mormon persecutions and several short polemical responses to critics of Mormonism.

From the 1840s to his death in 1857 Pratt's works often addressed citizens of the locality where he resided or was passing through. For example, he wrote a tract to residents in New York and a letter to Queen Victoria, along with broadsides and other short tracts while in Britain. During the Mormon migration to Utah in the late 1840s Pratt published almost nothing. When he left to head the California and Pacific missions in the early 1850s he produced another flurry of tracts addressed to citizens in those areas, including an attempted translation of one for Spanish language readers, *Proclamation!: extraordinaria, para los Americanos Espanoles*. 1855 saw the publication of *Key to the Science of Theology*. Between its appearance and his death he published only one more work, an 1856 defense of polygamy titled *Marriage and Morals in Utah*.

Two of Pratt's most important writings went unpublished until the 1880s. The first was his autobiography (published in 1888), the foremost source of information about

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<sup>26</sup> Givens and Grow, 398-400.

his life. The second was the first known work of Mormon fiction, now largely forgotten, called *The Angel of the Prairies* (1880). This short story was purportedly written in the early 1840s and read in Joseph Smith's presence.<sup>27</sup> In the story, Pratt laid out a rather explicit vision of future events related to the development of Mormon theocracy, including the overthrow of the American government and battles between the new defenders of freedom and the tyrannical bastions of the old guard.

### **The Importance and Purpose of *Key to the Science of Theology***

The study of Mormonism presents challenges to the historian because of a particular dualism that occurs in the process of uncovering the roots of Mormon doctrine. On one hand, nearly everything espoused by Joseph Smith had a proof-text somewhere in scripture. If it was not found in the Bible then it could be found in one of the other texts in the Mormon canon. Even if one questions the authenticity of Smith's scriptural contributions they were rarely without precedent somewhere in Judeo-Christian and/or occult written tradition.<sup>28</sup> In this sense the development of Mormon doctrine can be viewed in a theological vacuum and often is. For example, *The Story of the Latter-day Saints* (1992) by James B. Allen and Glen M. Leonard painted a clean and clear picture of Mormon origins as starting with Jesus Christ and moving through Constantine, the

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<sup>27</sup> Parley P. Pratt, *The Angel of the Prairies; a Dream of the Future* (Salt Lake City: Deseret News, 1880), 3.

<sup>28</sup> For biblical and ancient historical roots of Smith's ideas any perusal through the footnotes of the *Doctrine and Covenants* and *Pearl of Great Price* or a Mormon apologetics website such as <http://farms.byu.edu> or <http://www.fairlds.org> will suffice. For occult traditions see: D. Michael Quinn, *Early Mormonism and the Magic World View* (Salt Lake City: Signature Books, 1998).

Reformation, Puritans, Roger Williams, and the Second Great Awakening.<sup>29</sup> Certainly not without warrant, this interpretation is heavily reliant on theological ideas that try to connect Mormonism to historical Christianity despite the former's attempt to separate itself from the latter. It also largely ignores similarities between the Book of Mormon and Smith's revelations to the ancient Jewish literary tradition known as *apocryphon*. These were later expansions made upon biblical texts as exemplified by the so-called "Genesis Apocryphon" found among the Dead Sea Scrolls.<sup>30</sup> On the other hand, Smith's ideas are based on many parallels, if not direct dialogue, with contemporaneous religious and scientific thought. One example is the Mormon conception of materialism and how it related to those of other philosophers and scientists in the nineteenth century.<sup>31</sup> In this sense, viewing Mormonism in a vacuum misleads. However, parallels are one thing and direct dialogue is another. Where evidence is non-existent the historian must struggle to fit Smith and early Mormonism into its proper context. Pratt's theology presents the same issues.

The importance of Parley Pratt's writing has been recognized from the nineteenth century to the present. A recent biography declares that *Key to the Science of Theology*, along with Pratt's earlier *A Voice of Warning*, were the two most important non-canonical works of nineteenth century Mormonism.<sup>32</sup> "By 1884, *Key to the Science of Theology* had gone through nine editions and sold thirty thousand copies," according to Pratt's

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<sup>29</sup> James B. Allen and Glen M. Leonard, *The Story of the Latter-day Saints* (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book Co., 1992), 7-19.

<sup>30</sup> Michael Wise, Martin Abegg, Jr., and Edward Cook, *The Dead Sea Scrolls: A New Translation* (New York: HarperSanFrancisco, 2005), 89.

<sup>31</sup> For a discussion of this see: Max Nolan, "Materialism and the Mormon Faith," *Dialogue: A Journal of Mormon Thought* 22, no. 4 (Winter 1989): 62-74.

<sup>32</sup> Givens and Grow, 6, 119. See also: Paul, 112.

son.<sup>33</sup> Earlier Mormon writers also commented on the popularity of Pratt's writings among nineteenth-century Mormons, including M. Hamlin Cannon in the 1940s<sup>34</sup> and Sterling McMurrin in the 1960s.<sup>35</sup>

In the period immediately following the publication of Pratt's *Key to the Science of Theology*, its importance was apparent in a catalog by the publisher F.D. Richards. Pratt's writings were listed second, only after LDS scripture and a few miscellaneous tracts about then-current missions. Missionaries relied on Pratt's works as key to Mormon doctrine.<sup>36</sup> In 1857 Mormon detractor John Hyde wrote that Pratt had "written a singular work, 'The Key to Theology,' about which much expectation was excited."<sup>37</sup> Prior to the publication of *Key to the Science of Theology* Pratt claimed in his autobiography that *A Voice of Warning* had by then sold forty to fifty thousand copies.<sup>38</sup> If taken together with the claims of his son, by the mid-1880s at least eighty thousand copies of Pratt's two most important works were in circulation. With a membership hovering around 160,000 in 1885 this meant that nearly one copy of Pratt's writings existed for every two members of the Church, most likely more considering that *A Voice of Warning* was reprinted every few years into and beyond the 1880s.

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<sup>33</sup> Givens and Grow, 331, 463 n.75.

<sup>34</sup> M. Hamlin Cannon, "Angels and Spirits in Mormon Doctrine," *California Folklore Quarterly* 4, no. 4 (Oct., 1945): 343 n.1.

<sup>35</sup> Sterling M. McMurrin, *Theological Foundations of the Mormon Religion* (Salt Lake City: University of Utah Press, 1965), 68.

<sup>36</sup> Franklin D. Richards, *Catalogue of Works Published by the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, and For Sale by F.D. Richards, at their General Repository, and "Millennial Star" Office* (Liverpool: F.D. Richards, 1855), 1.

<sup>37</sup> John Hyde, *Mormonism: Its Leaders and Designs* (New York: W.P. Fetridge & Company, 1857), 135.

<sup>38</sup> Parley P. Pratt, *The Autobiography of Parley Parker Pratt* (Chicago: Pratt Bros., 1888), 184.

Pratt began writing *Key to the Science of Theology* (heretofore referred to as *Key to Theology*<sup>39</sup>) in 1851 while on his mission to California.<sup>40</sup> He continued writing it while in Chile. He finished the manuscript upon his return to Utah in 1853.<sup>41</sup> Throughout, Pratt struggled to make a living, alternately as a farmer and missionary, and his manuscript remained unpublished until 1855 when he found a publisher in England. England was the focal point of LDS publishing in the early decades of the Church in large part due to Pratt's efforts in establishing a presence there during the 1840s.<sup>42</sup> Notwithstanding delays in its publication, *Key to Theology* represented a lifetime of thought and built on ideas first propounded in Pratt's earlier writings, especially missionary tracts stemming from his years in England.

Although other LDS thinkers, including Brigham Young and Pratt's brother Orson, took Mormon theology down more speculative trajectories than Pratt, his theology was at once the most rational and radical of the nineteenth century. Within a staunchly materialist framework and a pre-Darwinian scientific understanding of humanity Pratt reached logical conclusions about the cosmos and humanity's origins and destiny. However, it is in the totality of Pratt's vision that the truly radical nature of his ideas can be seen. For Pratt Mormonism united heaven and earth, made God and man one race, and redefined the heavenly Jerusalem of Revelation and the earthly Jerusalem of history.

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<sup>39</sup> This was the redacted nickname by which the book was commonly referred to in the nineteenth century.

<sup>40</sup> Givens and Grow, 300.

<sup>41</sup> Givens and Grow, 317.

<sup>42</sup> Pamphleteering, in particular, was a key missionary tool for disseminating doctrine among people without immediate access to the Prophet Joseph Smith. In 1840 Pratt established a newspaper in England, the *Latter Day Saints' Millennial Star*, and he was responsible for the first local edition of the Book of Mormon in Europe, published to expedite the process of dissemination. See: Givens and Grow, 178, 189.

For Pratt, government on earth was not merely a reflection of the heavens but a literal extension of it.

According to Pratt the universe was governed by a confederation of Gods, angels, men, and spirits who together constituted one race in various stages of progression.<sup>43</sup> All men, angels, and Gods were embodied with those superior to humanity having had their bodies perfected through a process known as “quickenings.”<sup>44</sup> In Pratt’s view Edenic community and communication with other worlds was possible. In fact, theology itself was not just a science, rather every science and art known to the cosmic race was but one part of an all-encompassing Theology (which he always styled as a proper noun with a capital ‘T’ in *Key to Theology*). Whereas theology in traditional thinking focused on humanity’s relationship and communion with God, to Pratt Theology also included communication between Gods even if humans were absent from the dialogue.

On earth salvation was won by adherence to the word of God’s representative on earth, the Prophet of the Mormon Church, a literal descendent of Israel’s royal line.<sup>45</sup> Joseph Smith had claimed to be a literal descendent of the “seed of Abraham” and during his life he never made this claim for anyone else in the Church. However, during the leadership crisis following Smith’s death, Brigham Young expanded this claim to himself (and if nothing else, he and Smith were distant cousins). Subsequently, Young came to believe that “members of the Council of Twelve Apostles and ‘many others’ in the

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<sup>43</sup> Pratt, *Key to Theology*, 33.

<sup>44</sup> Benjamin E. Park, “Salvation Through a Tabernacle: Joseph Smith, Parley P. Pratt, and Early Mormon Theologies of Embodiment,” *Dialogue: A Journal of Mormon Thought* 43, no. 2 (Summer 2010): 12. Park references some of Pratt’s earlier writings where he claims that the only difference between God’s body and man’s body is blood. Instead of blood God, and by extension a resurrected and perfected man, has “spirit” in his veins. See also: Pratt, *Key to Theology*, 32.

<sup>45</sup> Pratt, *Key to Theology*, 66, 72.

church were also entitled to the ‘keys and powers’ of priesthood authority by virtue of their ‘lineage & blood.’”<sup>46</sup> *Key to Theology* is one of the few places in early Mormon writing which even mentions this notion of descent. All the prophets of the Church until 1918 were related by marriage or kinship to someone who had married into the families of Smith or Young.<sup>47</sup>

In their 2011 biography of Pratt, Terryl Givens and Matthew Grow suggested that the full title of *Key to Theology* should be understood to mean that “science encompassed theology rather than simply coexisted harmoniously with it.”<sup>48</sup> However, the initial pages of Pratt’s work present a different idea. Rather than theology being subservient to science, science was subservient to Theology. All human endeavors in art and science were but parts of this Theology. Furthermore, Theology was not just simply one discipline of science out of many but was the ultimate science, itself encompassing, rather than coexisting with, all aspects of the universe in one harmonious whole. Speaking teleologically, the purpose of every action, whether artistic, scientific, revelatory, or social, was communication. For Pratt communication meant “correspondence, between God, angels, spirits, and men, by means of visions, dreams, interpretations, conversations, inspirations, or the spirit of prophecy and revelation.”<sup>49</sup>

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<sup>46</sup> Newell G. Bringhurst, *Saints, Slaves, and Blacks: The Changing Place of Black People Within Mormonism* (Westport, CT.: Greenwood Press, 1981), 97. Bringhurst argued that the elevation of royal descent as a prerequisite for priesthood was in part to keep African-Americans, as the cursed “seed of Cain,” from obtaining it. Pratt happened to be one of the more outspoken against African-Americans holding the priesthood so this is a plausible explanation.

<sup>47</sup> Interestingly, in the 1915 edition of *Key to Theology* the doctrine of royal descent was softened to say that the prophet should be but was not required to be of this supposed royal descent, perhaps in anticipation of Heber J. Grant, a non-relative of previous presidents, taking the presidency upon the death of Joseph F. Smith.

<sup>48</sup> Givens and Grow, 333.

<sup>49</sup> Pratt, *Key to Theology*, 1.

Communication with the material universe (via science and society) and all levels of divine being (via prayer) was towards the purpose of eternal progression.

Communication was the necessary means by which beings grew and gained understanding. This goes for humans as well as Gods in the Mormon conception of the term.<sup>50</sup> Without communication life would remain inert, without substance or meaning. In other words, progression would be impossible.<sup>51</sup>

Givens and Grow miss Pratt's explicit statements, such as Theology "is the science of all other sciences and useful arts, being in fact the very fountain from which they emanate."<sup>52</sup> Viewing Pratt's work in the context of a struggle against secularizing forces, Givens and Grow neglect Pratt's more immediate concerns: He was trying to fit contemporary science back into a theological mold in order to show how God used science to communicate and reveal his motives. Pratt noted a number of examples from the Bible in the first few pages of his book, including God having revealed shipbuilding, surveying, control of the elements, and healing abilities to humanity.<sup>53</sup>

Other scholars have recognized Pratt's emphasis on communication in relation to the contemporary fad of Spiritualism, a popular religious movement led by such figures as Andrew Jackson Davis. John L. Brooke writes that Pratt "could have" been drawing

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<sup>50</sup> "Logically and naturally, the ultimate desire of a loving Supreme Being is to help his children enjoy all that he enjoys. For Latter-day Saints, the term 'godhood' denotes the attainment of such a state – one of having all divine attributes and doing as God does and being as God is. Such a state is to be enjoyed by all exalted, embodied, intelligent beings. The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints teaches that all resurrected and perfected mortals become gods (cf. Gen. 3:22; Matt. 5:48). They will dwell again with God the Father, and live and act like him in endless worlds of happiness, power, love, glory, and knowledge; above all, they will have the power of procreating endless lives. Latter-day Saints believe that Jesus Christ attained godhood and that he marked the path and led the way for others likewise to become exalted divine beings by following him (cf. John 14:3)." K. Codell Carter, "Godhood," in *Encyclopedia of Mormonism*, ed. Daniel H. Ludlow (New York: Macmillan Publishing Company, 1992), 553.

<sup>51</sup> Pratt, *Key to Theology*, 1-2.

<sup>52</sup> *Ibid.*, 2.

<sup>53</sup> *Ibid.*, 3-9.

inspiration from the use of the word “communication” in regards to “animal magnetism,” a term popularized by the practice of Mesmerism.<sup>54</sup> “Communication” could also be applied to the Spiritualist practice of the séance, where mediums were said to communicate with the spirits of the dead in what was known as necromancy. The influence of Spiritualism on Pratt is discussed in Chapter Three and had more to do with cosmological speculation and countering apostasy outside of Utah. In fact, there was a much more immediate source for Pratt’s emphasis on communication in *Key to Theology*, that of the growth of communication technology in the nineteenth century.

In *What Hath God Wrought*, Daniel Walker Howe emphasizes the simultaneous explosion of communication technologies and religion in the years 1815-1848. Not only does Howe show how these phenomena arose in parallel, he demonstrates how technological innovators, such as the inventor of the telegraph Samuel F.B. Morse, saw themselves as divine instruments.<sup>55</sup> The title of Howe’s book comes from the Bible verse that Morse used as the message on the first public demonstration of the telegraph. Howe explains that Morse saw this as God baptizing his invention, giving it providential meaning beyond mere progress for the sake of progress.<sup>56</sup> For Morse, the telegraph was part of God’s unfolding plan.

Similarly, Pratt emphasized the development of an all-encompassing and divinely attuned universal “knowledge” base in his preface to *Key to Theology*.<sup>57</sup> There he stated:

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<sup>54</sup> John L. Brooke, *The Refiner’s Fire: The Making of Mormon Cosmology, 1644-1844* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1994), 207.

<sup>55</sup> Daniel W. Howe, *What Hath God Wrought: The Transformation of America, 1815-1848* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007), 2.

<sup>56</sup> *Ibid.*, 3.

<sup>57</sup> *Ibid.*, xiv.

“[t]he triumphs of steam over earth and sea, the extensions of railroads, and, above all, the lightning powers of the telegraph, are already... developing, concentrating, and consolidating the energies and interests of all nations, preparatory to the universal development of knowledge.”<sup>58</sup> Pratt’s “knowledge” was all about knowing God and understanding “Truth.” For Pratt (like Morse) modern technology, particularly in regards to communication, was the work of God. Nothing else could explain its existence.

### **Joseph Smith and the Metaphysics of Mormon Thought**

Though he probably did not regard himself as such, Parley Pratt was an artist, a literary artist specifically. He wrote poems, stories, letters, pamphlets, news articles, and books. Most of this creative energy was used for missionizing purposes, and Pratt was able to see his work disseminated through Church-owned printing presses. Pratt’s creativity involved a self-conscious attempt to understand theological ideas on his own terms. His theology drew primarily from the teachings of Joseph Smith. All of the Church’s founding documents, aside from the King James Bible, were products of Smith in one fashion or another. Smith himself was a self-styled eclectic who drew from many non-Christian sources for inspiration (i.e., Freemasonry, ancient Egypt, the occult, nineteenth-century science).

Smith’s revelations filled in gaps in the biblical narrative that no other prophet or cleric of his day could provide. For example, in regards to the translation Smith made of the King James Bible:

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<sup>58</sup> Pratt, *Key to Theology*, 73.

Most of the passages revised or added by Joseph Smith are of doctrinal significance. While many individual topics are involved, some main themes are (1) an emphasis in both the Old and New Testaments on the mission and divinity of Jesus Christ; (2) the nature of God; (3) the innocence of children; (4) the Plan of Salvation; (5) premortal life; (6) the holy priesthood and credentials of the Patriarchs; (7) the ministries of Enoch and of Melchizedek; and (8) clarification of ambiguous passages, elimination of some contradictions between biblical texts, and explanations of terms and phrases.<sup>59</sup>

Smith was able to weave new mythology into the biblical narrative in an exciting and seductive way, creating a new institutional hierarchy with a pedigree going all the way back to Adam. It was a lot for a young convert like Pratt to absorb in the 1830s, but it armed him and his contemporaries with a bolder and stronger understanding of divine history than did mainstream Christianity. Because Smith issued his revelations in a piecemeal fashion, they allowed his followers time to internalize new ideas and come to individual interpretations of them. In Pratt's case it was enough for him to try to recreate on paper Smith's vision in a more systematic way. This included, when necessary, elaborating on Smith's revelations in much the same way Smith did when something was missing or confusing in the Bible.

While much of Smith's writings survived, a great deal more did not. As scholar Philip L. Barlow has noted, "[t]he most careful student of the matter calculates that not more than 10 percent of the Prophet's sermons were recorded, and that they were not captured with any consistency until the last eighteen months of his life."<sup>60</sup> Smith's most famous sermon, the so-called King Follett Discourse, was delivered only months before his June 1844 death. Although Smith claimed that he had always taught the doctrines of

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<sup>59</sup> Robert J. Matthews, "Joseph Smith Translation of the Bible (JST)," in *Encyclopedia of Mormonism*, ed. Ludlow, 763-769.

<sup>60</sup> Philip L. Barlow, "To Mend a Fractured Reality: Joseph Smith's Project," *Journal of Mormon History* 38, no. 3 (Summer 2012): 28-29.

a plurality of gods and worlds, it was only from this point that such teachings appear in the historical record. Many of Smith's revelations were only written when a situation called for it, and others, by his own admittance, he kept to himself.<sup>61</sup>

Why would Smith want to keep his teachings to himself, beyond the notion that his followers had not been sufficiently prepared for his most radical teachings? The answer perhaps lies in the creative process that Smith underwent as he fashioned his new religion in time and space. Barlow has recently summed up Smith's creative drive as such:

That Mormonism's rise was enabled by its time and place is hardly contestable, but the movement exceeded the bounds of its culture; it cannot be reduced to a byproduct of its setting. Nor did Smith merely plagiarize and borrow in the ordinary sense, as he has been described as doing. Instead, he was moved to respond creatively. This revelatory creativity certainly incorporated elements from his immediate and imagined environs, but this was after the pattern of how, as Joseph would later explain, God created the world itself: not *ex nihilo*, but by drawing from and fashioning the debris and chaos of unorganized materials.<sup>62</sup>

If Smith understood his revelations in terms of creativity, it follows that the idea of personal revelation he enshrined as one of the so-called spiritual gifts in the Church's Articles of Faith was also an act of creativity.<sup>63</sup> This meant that Smith needed to leave room for others' creativity. If he had revealed to the membership of the Church all that had been revealed to him, there would be no further creativity and revelation within the Church, only a mass of blind, passive followers. By not revealing everything to his audience Smith enabled and even necessitated active participation in thought and practice among his fellow apostles and followers. It is precisely this sort of active, if not also

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<sup>61</sup> Barlow, 29.

<sup>62</sup> *Ibid.*, 34-35.

<sup>63</sup> See "Articles of Faith," verse 7, in the *Pearl of Great Price*.

eclectic, assimilationist, and syncretic creativity that Parley Pratt engaged in when he composed his theological ideas. It can therefore be said that Pratt used a wider array of literary styles than Smith to express his creativity. Thanks to Smith, Pratt had a ready basis from which to work.

The metaphysics of early Mormon thought revolved around the notion of a “restoration of all things.” This idea was taken from Acts 3:20-21.<sup>64</sup> Encapsulated in these verses is the notion that prophets had periodically appeared throughout time preaching the Messiah because people had fallen away from the true faith and forgotten the coming savior; it was the prophets’ duty to restore this faith in people. This faith, or Gospel, was given first to Adam, then Abraham, Moses and all of the major prophets of Hebrew scripture. Jesus himself restored this faith when he appeared on Earth, but subsequent generations fell away into corruption and faithlessness, in what Mormons call the Great Apostasy (since Christ was the fulfillment of the Gospel). When this happened is not clear (it is generally regarded as having occurred by the time of Constantine in the fourth century), but it involved priesthood authority vanishing and the Christian church no longer being the authorized church of Christ.

When in 1830 Joseph Smith incorporated the Church of Christ, as the LDS Church was called initially, he believed he had restored Christ’s original church with authorized priesthood authority and saving ordinances that Smith received at the hands of ancient apostles. Additionally,

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<sup>64</sup> Acts 3:20-21: “And he shall send Jesus Christ, which before was preached unto you: Whom the heaven must receive until the times of restitution of all things, which God hath spoken by the mouth of all his holy prophets since the world began.”

The restoration spoken of in the scriptures involves more than a reestablishment of the Church and the function of saving ordinances. Scattered Israel will be gathered, the second coming of Christ will occur, the Millennium will begin, the kingdom of God will be established worldwide, and “the earth will be renewed and receive its paradisiacal glory.”<sup>65</sup>

Some scholars of Mormonism have seen the restoration going beyond even this scripture-based program.<sup>66</sup> Barlow, for example, claims that Smith’s goal was to repair this “universe of relations” in terms of the human soul as a physical and spiritual totality, the nature of families both temporal and eternal, hidden narratives of earthly history, cosmic history before the earth was organized, and the restoration of doctrine, prophecy, spiritual gifts and ritual.<sup>67</sup>

Doctrine, covenants, scripture, and ritual gave people a common framework and pattern for coexistence and cooperation. Prophecy, spiritual gifts, revelation, and the Holy Ghost provided the creative outlets and inspiration for personal and interpersonal growth. Though all humanity may be related biologically (both in terms of biblical understanding and modern science) it does not mean that there is any inherent reason why people should join in community with each other. Differences of opinion and battles over resources breach human relations, both individual and communal. By walking a delicate line between order and freedom Smith sought to bring people together while still allowing for personal autonomy. This is one of the main reasons why Mormonism, as it has been conceived since Smith, has often been more concerned with practice over well-defined official theology.

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<sup>65</sup> Cory H. Maxwell, “Restoration of All Things,” in *Encyclopedia of Mormonism*, ed. Ludlow, 1218-1219. The quotation comes from the Church’s Articles of Faith.

<sup>66</sup> As Barlow has written it was “a visionary diagnosis of the human condition itself: Everything was cracked; relations were out of joint; order was broken.” Barlow, 48.

<sup>67</sup> *Ibid.*, 48.

Terryl Givens placed Smith in the context of antebellum Romanticism and its notions of human originality and self-articulation. In doing so, Givens pointed out a seemingly contradictory element of Smith's thought and that is the underlying legalist rhetoric he frequently used.<sup>68</sup> Priesthood authority and covenants between people and/or God were essential elements of Smith's practice. These were conferred through the ritual of sealing, meaning:

For Latter-day Saints, the ultimate sealing power is the priesthood power given to authorized servants of the Lord to perform certain acts on earth and have them recognized (sealed) or validated in heaven. They believe it is this authority the Lord Jesus Christ described when he said to Peter, "I will give unto thee the keys of the kingdom of heaven: and whatsoever thou shalt bind on earth shall be bound in heaven: and whatsoever thou shalt loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven" (Matt. 16:19).<sup>69</sup>

The power of sealing families together for time and eternity was the height of the legal power Smith introduced into the Church via the priesthood. In temporal terms, sealing may not have had much weight on earth, but in terms of cosmology it was one of Smith's most important innovations. Sealing made eternal covenants necessary as part of the process of planet organization, for how else could couples end up in the same place after death and continue the same program in which they had been engaged while on earth? As Givens wrote, sealing made humans "co-participants with Deity itself in the ongoing project of world creation."<sup>70</sup>

Yet, even those who did not make eternal covenants with each other or God within the Church could still participate in the unfolding cosmic drama, just at a lesser

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<sup>68</sup> Terryl L. Givens, "Joseph Smith, Romanticism, and Tragic Creation," *Journal of Mormon History* 38, no. 3 (Summer 2012): 148-149.

<sup>69</sup> David H. Yarn, "Sealing: Sealing Power," in *Encyclopedia of Mormonism*, ed. Ludlow, 1288.

<sup>70</sup> Givens, 152.

degree. It was precisely this universalism that was so precious to the cosmic process for it gave people free agency. The Romantic notions of human originality and self-articulation ran the risk of over-extending themselves in extreme forms such as despotism and amorality.<sup>71</sup> Even within Christianity religion could become “personalized and interiorized” to an extent that both God and Christ were dismissed outright, thus breaking the bonds of human and spiritual relationships. The results were often overt secularism or New Age philosophies, such as those of Andrew Jackson Davis, which denounced organized religion in favor of more personalized spirituality. Givens argued that “Joseph [Smith] rooted his theology in the opposing grounds of Romantic liberalism on the one hand, with its untrammelled freedom, and legalistic frameworks with their laws and ordinances on the other, to avoid the excesses of both.”<sup>72</sup>

It is in this context that Pratt’s *Key to Theology* is related to nineteenth-century Spiritualism. Pratt was at once practicing eclectic creativity and freedom of thought by adapting Spiritualist cosmology while at the same time he placed that cosmology within a Mormon legalistic (and biblical) framework. In doing so Pratt sought to lessen the danger that fellow Mormons (and perhaps himself) might fall into liberal religious paths such as Spiritualism. The dance between legalism and absolute freedom played out in Mormonism’s relationship to the United States. The relationship evolved during the early years of the Church from an emphasis on biblical law to an emphasis on secular law and protection. In other words, Smith sought to move the Saints’ understanding of

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<sup>71</sup> Givens, 155.

<sup>72</sup> Ibid., 157.

America being founded on the Bible to an America founded on a divinely inspired Constitution.<sup>73</sup>

Part of the problem with a biblical foundation was that Smith believed the Bible was flawed, that many of its “plain and important truths” had been removed during the Great Apostasy prior to the Restoration. In short, the Bible that orthodox Christians brought across the Atlantic was incomplete. Therefore, if America was founded on that Bible then “the American nation was flawed in its founding.”<sup>74</sup> This notion is found in the Book of Mormon.<sup>75</sup> The solution to it was to uphold the Constitution as a divinely inspired text. In a revelation given to Smith on December 16, 1833, the voice of God decreed that the Constitution was established by God using “wise men” chosen for that very purpose. “Adopting the Constitution as a sort of scripture made it easier for the Saints to seek its protection.”<sup>76</sup> Whereas earlier revelations had decreed that Zion should rise up and essentially overthrow the American government, “the redemption of Zion was now tethered to the maintenance, not the demise, of America.”<sup>77</sup>

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<sup>73</sup> Mark Ashurst-McGee, “Zion in America: The Origins of Mormon Constitutionalism,” *Journal of Mormon History* 38, no. 3 (Summer 2012): 97-98.

<sup>74</sup> *Ibid.*, 98.

<sup>75</sup> 1 Nephi 13:29-30: “And after these plain and precious things were taken away it goeth forth unto all the nations of the Gentiles; and after it goeth forth unto all the nations of the Gentiles, yea, even across the many waters which thou hast seen with the Gentiles which have gone forth out of captivity, thou seest—because of the many plain and precious things which have been taken out of the book, which were plain unto the understanding of the children of men, according to the plainness which is in the Lamb of God—because of these things which are taken away out of the gospel of the Lamb, an exceedingly great many do stumble, yea, insomuch that Satan hath great power over them. Nevertheless, thou beholdest that the Gentiles who have gone forth out of captivity, and have been lifted up by the power of God above all other nations, upon the face of the land which is choice above all other lands, which is the land that the Lord God hath covenanted with thy father that his seed should have for the land of their inheritance; wherefore, thou seest that the Lord God will not suffer that the Gentiles will utterly destroy the mixture of thy seed, which are among thy brethren.”

<sup>76</sup> Ashurst-McGee, 98.

<sup>77</sup> *Ibid.*, 99.

Ashurst-McGee argued that in seeking protection from the government the Saints would ultimately be rejected by it, “thus incurring God’s fury” against it and ultimately leading to the millennial redemption of Israel (meaning both Zion in Palestine and the New Jerusalem in America) outside the political structure. In the meantime, however, it was necessary for Saints to work from within that structure. Compromising the millennial enterprise was a necessary step in establishing it. Mormons had first to be able to live and survive in America before they could be strong enough to support themselves as a sovereign entity. Parley Pratt understood this relationship as temporary. He noted that the Church should be brought up

in a land of free institutions, where such organization could be legally developed, and claim constitutional protection, until sufficiently matured to defend itself against the convulsions, the death struggles, the agonizing throes, which precede the dissolution of the long reign of mystic tyranny; and at a time when modern freedom had been consolidated, nationalized, and its standard recognized among the nations.<sup>78</sup>

Though Pratt did not explicitly state it here, the implication was that at some point the Church would be strong enough to effectively overthrow the government and rule independently as a theocratic state. The Constitution as a divinely inspired document served as a stepping stone in a political evolution which would play out in the slowness of time. Pratt used some form of the word *constitution* half a dozen times in *Key to Theology*, illustrating the level to which the word and its meaning had filtered into Mormon parlance by the 1850s. His use referred variably to legal documents, constitutional liberty or protection, and one’s own personal and physical well-being. For

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<sup>78</sup> Pratt, *Key to Theology*, 76.

Pratt, all of these were related in one way or another, as, for example, even one's well-being rested on the restoration of eternal laws and ordinances.<sup>79</sup>

### **Pratt's Apocalyptic Theology**

The legal, institutional, and governmental framework of Pratt's thought and his emphasis on the impending millennium gave his theology a distinctly apocalyptic cast. Whatever he drew from the outside world he placed within a Mosaic legal structure. Pratt created tension between the anticipation of the coming messiah and the kingdom of God already in the making. His theology was geared entirely towards the Mormon version of a restored gospel (the message and ordinances of Christ). It was a system based on a combination of scripture, science, and modern revelation. Beginning with his thirty-page poem "Millennium" in the 1830s and ending with *Key to Theology*, Pratt drew connections between prophecy, politics, and technological advancement. These connections pointed towards one thing: apocalypse. In Pratt's view the world was on the brink of radical (and positive) change where everyone would work together in pursuit of human advancement under a messianic order.

It must be understood that Pratt did not write systematically. Although he divided his books into thematic chapters, some of which were chronologically related in an historical sense, Pratt never started with a particular thesis in mind. He began *Key to Theology* with a definition of theology but it was so overarching in nature that calling it a point of departure would be difficult. Rather, Pratt wrote in an erratic and emotive

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<sup>79</sup> Pratt, *Key to Theology*, 170.

fashion that was characteristic of apocalyptic writings down to the present day. His system must be distilled from numerous places in order to place it in logical order.

James E. Faulconer's discussion of apocalyptic theology in contrast to systematic or dogmatic theology is helpful to understanding Pratt's worldview. Faulconer described the tension between the coming messiah and the kingdom already at hand as a lived experience in both time and space. He called this experience a *type* or *prefiguration* of the millennium to come. Christ had already appeared once and was resurrected, thus creating both the anticipation of his return as well as the kingdom in actuality. The restored Gospel of Joseph Smith and his revelations tied these two aspects together in a manner that brought immediacy to Christ's return and the gathering of the scattered House of Israel.

The apocalyptic underpinnings of Smith's project carried over into Pratt's writings in a manner that the "experience [of] the Apocalypse does not so much refer to the end of the world—though it also refers to that—as it refers to the moment when the nearness of the kingdom of God is revealed to the believer and the believer's life is oriented by that kingdom rather than by the world."<sup>80</sup> If Pratt was aiming for one thing, it was to excite people about the millennium, Pratt's word for the outward apocalypse described in Revelation. His own orientation to the kingdom of God is evident in his writings. Over time Pratt's focus moved from the metaphysics of the millennium and Jewish prophecy to materialist notions of spirit and a cosmology based on a conglomerate of spiritually similar beings operating on planetary systems in every reach of the

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<sup>80</sup> James E. Faulconer, "Rethinking Theology: The Shadow of the Apocalypse," *The FARMS Review* 19, no. 1 (2007): 176.

universe. His own inner apocalyptic experience of conversion and proselytizing eventually opened up cosmic possibilities and a deep yearning for the return of Christ in order to see those possibilities come to life. Pratt's apocalyptic orientation intensified through adulthood from one of personal changes, the millennial reign of Christ and beyond, to a point where the whole universe became one giant theater of beings moving from one stage of progression to another and on to godhood.

As Faulconer has pointed out, one of the problems of theology as it relates to faith is that theology can easily fall into the trap of being merely an intellectual exercise. In this sense theology becomes a manner of learning where the Gospel and the revelation of God, indeed God himself, become invisible;

Without the figured, typological experience of conversion, we cannot see the truth of the gospel... as long as the Good News and God's kingdom are invisible in theology, it cannot really be talk about God. What we say may concern itself with his effects in this world or with our ideas and understanding of him. It may be about the details of our beliefs, our understanding of his revelation. Theology may be about many things, but it is not about him if it does not reveal him, and it does not reveal him if it does not announce the nearness of his kingdom.<sup>81</sup>

In Pratt's all-encompassing Theology revelation went hand-in-hand with reason and rationality. In this sense Pratt was able to overcome this particular problem of theology. The Gospel, the announcement of the kingdom, and God's continued revelation to humanity was found everywhere in Pratt's writings. Even if, as a whole, Pratt presented something of a system his purpose was missionary in nature. He was summarizing the revelation of Christ's imminent return in order to convince people to gather into the kingdom in the form of the institutional Church.

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<sup>81</sup> Faulconer, 178.

According to Faulconer, systematic theology is dangerous for the reason that it can effectively annihilate God from the picture or, rather, the believer's relationship with God. In contrast, apocalyptic theology focuses on that relationship. While Faulconer pointed out that systematic theology can also be apocalyptic, the inverse is also true.<sup>82</sup> Apocalyptic theology can also have a particular system. It would depend on where the focus is. In Pratt's case, apocalypse was the focus, but in his own mind he was simply relaying a system, the science in *Key to the Science of Theology*. He may have been seeing it as dogma but it was essentially apocalyptic theology with a systematic bent. The use of the word *science* implied a systematic use of previously obtained knowledge. That knowledge had come through the natural sciences and revelation, both ancient and modern. Yet, hidden within his work's title was the apocalyptic message, that of calling theology a science, the culmination of all man's historic endeavors and the word of God fusing into one mold ready to challenge and change the world, to bring the kingdom of God to fruition.

Faulconer wrote that apocalyptic theology "is defined by what it does rather than by its objects and methods; it is defined by its revelation of the nearness of the kingdom of God."<sup>83</sup> Pratt's work drew upon objects and ideas both scientific and revealed, but he lacked any distinct method other than to cram it all into a little book thematically and somewhat arbitrarily arranged. It was precisely this collecting of ideas as a mass of Theology that made the appeal to science plausible. For Pratt science was the means of revelation that would stir an apocalyptic religious awakening. He wrote, "While every

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<sup>82</sup> Faulconer, 182.

<sup>83</sup> Ibid., 182.

science, every art is being developed; while the mind is awakened to new thought; while the windows of heaven are opened, as it were, and the profound depths of human intellect are stirred — moved from the foundation on all other subjects, religious knowledge seems at a stand still.”<sup>84</sup> That there could even be a key to the science of theology meant that God had revealed enough to humanity to be able to see the universe as one interconnected whole, the teleological point of Pratt’s writing.

Drawing on the work of French theologian Jean-Luc Marion, Faulconer drew a distinction between that which can be called an “icon” and that which can be called an “idol” and applied this idea to theology. Iconic theology and idolatrous theology:

Begin with the icon: an icon reveals something other than itself, something divine. Apocalyptic theology as I am describing it is iconic. It reveals the nearness of the kingdom. In contrast, with an idol I claim to produce something that re-presents, that *makes* manifest, the Divine. The idol creates the appearing of the god rather than merely creating a locus in which that appearing may happen. In creating an idol I have the audacity to claim to make the Divine appear, even if only in an image. If ‘theology’ means only ‘our talk about God,’ then it is idolatrous, for in it I use my powers of language to create an image of God, violating the second of the Ten Commandments.<sup>85</sup>

This framework illuminates Pratt’s attack on historical and sectarian Christianity. In *Key to Theology* Pratt puts the word Christianity in quotation marks.<sup>86</sup> In his pamphlet from 1851 he refers to “all the branches of the *so-called* Christian church”<sup>87</sup> (emphasis added).

Pratt’s problem with Christianity was mostly with Protestants who adhered to the Westminster Confession, which declared that God was without body, parts or passions.

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<sup>84</sup> Pratt, *Key to Theology*, xii

<sup>85</sup> Faulconer, 184.

<sup>86</sup> Pratt, *Key to Theology*, 19.

<sup>87</sup> Parley P. Pratt, *Proclamation! To the People of the Coasts and Islands of the Pacific; of Every Nation, Kindred and Tongue* (C.W. Wandell, 1851), 4.

Pratt wrote that “there never has been a visible idol worshipped among men, which was so powerless as this” deity. In his view “such a God could never be seen, heard, or felt, by any being in the universe.”<sup>88</sup> In other words, no revelations could happen because Christianity, as Pratt saw it, worshipped a non-entity. Pratt compared several pagan deities to the god of the Protestants to show that even these gods could be felt in some manner or another. Any theology pertaining to the unembodied and passionless God of Westminster would have been to Pratt idolatrous.

Even as speculative as Pratt’s theology may have been in places (as it was when he strayed from canonical sources, including Smith’s revelations) his sole purpose in writing was to present God’s revelation in the world and how the kingdom of God operated. In Faulconer’s terms Pratt created a “locus” in which God could be revealed rather than simply trying to create an image of God. In this sense, Pratt’s theology was iconic rather than idolatrous. He was battling the failure of historic Christianity to produce a living interaction with God with an apocalyptic wake-up call to re-engage. The idolatry of “Mystery Babylon” was to be replaced by the iconography of the continued revelation of an embodied and passionate God. Pratt was not trying to create a substance-less god with words, to *represent* him/it, but to present in their entirety words already spoken by God through his prophets. Pratt was not forming God to Pratt’s image but calling people to form themselves to God’s living and continued word.

Parley Pratt’s literary project, in its totality but especially in *Key to Theology*, was not only the first all-encompassing attempt at a thorough exegesis of Mormon thought, it was the culmination of early Mormon thought. Pratt took everything the new religion

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<sup>88</sup> Pratt, *Key to Theology*, 28.

had to offer the world and put it into one package. He did this at a time when Mormonism was enjoying an extraordinary amount of freedom in the Great Basin. In a few years the federal government would come knocking and seek to take control of Utah territory. Pratt's very call to use the government for protection would force the LDS Church to make concessions in its doctrines, including much of what Pratt insisted was divinely sanctioned activity.

Pratt's death in 1857 can be seen as symbolic of the end of early Mormonism as a whole. Events like the Mountain Meadows Massacre, the Utah War of 1857-1858, the Morrill Anti-Bigamy Act of 1862 (though not enforced at the time, it eventually evolved into the Edmonds-Tucker Act of 1887), and Utah's push for statehood combined to create a relationship of tension between the Mormons and the federal government. Brigham Young would eventually have to give up control of Utah, Mormons would be forced to end the practice of polygamy, and trust-busting legislation during the Theodore Roosevelt administration brought down a number of LDS Church economic practices. Pratt's vision of a theocracy would not be realized but it would not be from lack of trying on the part of Pratt and his fellow Mormon apostles. Eschatologically driven, Pratt aimed at unifying the world – particularly Gentiles, Jews, and Native Americans – under one divinely sanctioned government. He was aware that this would require complex politics and a number of apocalyptic events to take place. Pratt saw God at work in many world events in his own day and interpreted these as milestones on the path to theocracy, the establishment of Zion. Nor was Pratt alone in seeking a restoration of ancient Israel. Others, including mainstream Christians and Jews in both America and Europe were

beginning to envision a return of Palestine to the House of Israel. Pratt drew from history, scripture, and prophecy to craft a unique vision of what this entailed, how it would come about, and who would benefit from its manifestation.

## CHAPTER 2

### RESTORING THEOLOGY, ESTABLISHING ZION: PRATT'S ESCHATOLOGY

#### The Two Jeruselems

Parley Pratt's worldview was rooted in the biblical narrative of ancient Israel. This included history, scripture, and a heavy dose of prophecy. Pratt's sources of inspiration were both testaments of the Bible, the Book of Mormon, and the revelations of Joseph Smith. All of these were seen as essential pieces of the Israelite saga, complete with roles for Gentiles and Native Americans. When taken together, the story these texts told was of a struggle between a people and their God, and God's struggle to establish his domain over the earth: the kingdom of God. The texts pointed towards an eventual realization of this kingdom, headed by Jesus Christ. It would be brought into being by the combined effort of Jews, Gentiles, Native Americans, and the divine powers of Christ. As a reward for their efforts and righteousness, each of these groups would receive an inheritance in the form of sacred land situated in both the Eastern and Western hemispheres.

Pratt took these ideas seriously and literally. In his theological writings he worked out in detail a vision of the past, present, and future in strictly biblical terms. Pratt combined his knowledge of scripture and prophecy with an apocalyptic understanding of contemporary events to excite himself and others about the coming restoration of Israel, of Zion, and the New Jerusalem. In doing so, he was participating in an evolving intellectual current soon to pervade Jewish and some Christian religious circles at the end of the nineteenth century: Zionism. Pratt can be considered a proto-

Zionist, but one with a predominately Christian eschatological foundation that was ecumenical and philo-Semitic in nature.

Pratt's relationship with Judaism and his understanding of the roles of Gentiles and Native Americans in the unfolding millennial drama took its cue from a literal reading of scripture as documents of historical truth. Pratt's sense of history relied on providence rather than historiography, though he occasionally quoted from outside sources, particularly with regard to the Ten Lost Tribes. One thing an astute reader of Pratt's *Key to Theology* will notice is a complete lack of quotation from the Book of Mormon. Nowhere did Pratt pull proof-texts out of context to make an abstract theological point the way most theologians do with the Bible. Versification was not introduced into the text until the late 1870s by Pratt's brother Orson. Parley Pratt was less concerned with the spiritual insights of the book than with the historical narrative he found in it. In other words, Pratt used the Book of Mormon as a work of literal history. In some ways this was in keeping with Mormonism at the time in that for most converts the book held importance for its mere existence and the miraculous circumstances by which it was brought forth. Pratt, in fact, said little about the book's miraculous genesis and instead employed it to punctuate the grand narrative of sacred history, the biblical perspective of humanity's beginnings, struggles with civilization, the life of Christ, and the advent of the LDS Church. Revelation, as part of Pratt's Theology, was as tangible as the documentary record, or scientific discovery for that matter. When and where revelation concerned something historical, it was to be taken as the same authority as if it

had been an ancient document being held in his hands (which, in Pratt's view, the Book of Mormon was).

The historical relationship between Mormonism and Judaism was two-sided. On one hand were the Lamanites, Native Americans who, according to the Book of Mormon, were the descendants of ancient Hebrew peoples who had fallen out of righteousness. They were in need of redemption and purification. Indeed, Pratt was an obsessive proponent of missionizing to Native Americans. On the other hand were the Jews, both contemporary and ancient, who had lost the keys of Theology but were still God's chosen people. Eventually, this Theology would be returned to them, via the Gentiles. With Gentile help the Jews would establish Zion, albeit in a different pattern than the traditional Christian eschatology would have it. Eschatology means the end times, the ideas about what will happen when either history is culminated and a new age begins, or when the world comes to an end. In Christian terms, it typically means the time when Christ will return, cleanse the world of evil, and reign for a thousand years over his chosen people including the Jews who have come to accept Christ as their savior. These ideas stem from passages in the Gospel of Matthew and Revelation. Various interpretations abound, but most suggest events to take place in and around Jerusalem and modern Israel. Mormons expand upon traditional notions and change a few of the details. Zion and the New Jerusalem would not both be located in the Levant, and Jews would not need to convert to Mormonism/Christianity.

Historian Steven Epperson, in *Mormons and Jews*, has illustrated how LDS theology regarding the restoration of Zion and Jerusalem are related but not

interchangeable words as they are in traditional biblical exegesis. In traditional Christian eschatology the millennial reign of Christ will commence in events taking place in the Middle East. Final battles will occur at Har Meggido (located in Ottoman Palestine during Pratt's life), and the heavenly Jerusalem will descend and replace the earthly Jerusalem of history. In order for Jews to participate in the millennium a prior conversion to Christianity would be necessary.

Not so in Mormon theology. According to Mormon eschatology, Christ will return to the state of Missouri, the Garden of Eden as revealed by Joseph Smith. Christ will reign in this Jerusalem while the Twelve Tribes of Israel reclaim the land of their inheritance in Zion (Israel/Palestine), without converting to Christianity.<sup>1</sup> Despite differences in the desired outcome, Mormons and European Jewry by the mid-nineteenth century both thought in terms of a restoration of a political state of Israel, couched largely in religious terms. Calling either Zionism is anachronistic, but an intriguing parallel presents itself in the decades preceding the emergence of the movement by Theodor Herzl. In the early nineteenth century Judaism experienced a moderate decline in Europe. Many Jews found the faith lacking vitality and converted to Christianity, including the children of the great Jewish Enlightenment thinker Moses Mendelssohn. Christians, in both Europe and America, believed the Jews were in need of proselytizing and set themselves up to do so. Joseph Smith, however, never saw the need to convert Jews and in this sense differed dramatically from his contemporaries. At a time when

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<sup>1</sup> The idea of New Jerusalem being established on the American continent originates with the Book of Mormon, while its exact location in Missouri was the product of Smith's revelations as contained in the Doctrine and Covenants.

Hebrew was falling out of fashion in Europe, Smith and his School of the Prophets employed Jewish scholars to teach them the language.

According to Walter Laqueur, some proto-Zionists of the 1840s were prophetic but overly romantic in their ideas about a Jewish return to Palestine. Few proponents of proto-Zionism ideas ever took steps towards making them a reality.<sup>2</sup> At least one modern LDS authority has seen Smith's engagement with modern Jerusalem as prophetic as well. Eldin Ricks related a story of his visit to Israel in the 1950s; in it he described Smith as an early Christian Zionist to a Jewish audience. When asked what Smith had done Ricks told the story of Orson Hyde's trip to the Mount of Olives on behalf of Smith to offer a dedicatory prayer for the return of Jews to Palestine.<sup>3</sup> For early Mormons this would have been tantamount to offering their services. What is important is that there was both a theological context and a social/historical context for Mormon interest in a Jewish state in Palestine, even if Mormons and Jews were thinking about it differently. Pratt wrote of the return of "Israel and Judah to their own land and nationality."<sup>4</sup> Pratt carried on not just Smith's vision for twin states of Zion and New Jerusalem but also his respect for Judaism, at various points referring to the twelve original disciples of Jesus as the "Jewish Apostles."<sup>5</sup>

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<sup>2</sup> Walter Laqueur, *A History of Zionism: From the French Revolution to the Establishment of the State of Israel* (New York: Schocken Books, 2003), 46.

<sup>3</sup> Eldin Ricks, "Judah Must Return," *Ensign Magazine* (May 1972), <http://www.lds.org/ensign/1972/05/judah-must-return?lang=eng> (accessed February 21, 2012). The entire issue from May 1972 deals with Israel and Judaism.

<sup>4</sup> Pratt, *Key to Theology*, 20.

<sup>5</sup> *Ibid.*, 65. This is in relation to the twelve Nephite Apostles as found on the American continent according to the Book of Mormon.

### **Jews, the Ten Lost Tribes, Hebraic Indians, and the Restoration of Israel**

Generally speaking, there is nothing unique about early Mormon interest in Jewish prophecy or an eschatological worldview that included a restoration of Israel. Puritans had been saying similar things since the seventeenth century. With the birth of Hebrew studies at Protestant universities in the late sixteenth century, Protestant theologians placed new emphasis on the language and traditions of Judaism and its scripture. In doing so they developed a literal reading of Romans 11:25<sup>6</sup> whereby “Israel” was taken to mean not the Church with Gentiles and Jews together (under the banner of Christ) as Martin Luther and John Calvin had understood it, but “non-Christian Jews whose religion was Judaism.”<sup>7</sup> In other words, the Jews as a nation just prior to or during the millennium, would accept Jesus as the Jewish messiah and restore Israel, to be enjoyed by both Jewish and Gentile followers of Christ. This was not a symbolic view of the Church as a New Israel.<sup>8</sup>

Puritan theologians were quick to work out mathematical and symbolic interpretations of Revelation based on this new framework. Like many who followed in their footsteps, contemporary political conditions fed into the cosmic drama the Puritans sought to find in the immanent future. Thomas Brightman, an influential reformer of the early seventeenth century, interpreted Gog and Magog as the Ottoman Empire and its allies. The Jews, once they accepted Christ and occupied Palestine, would be surrounded by the Ottomans, at which point “God will miraculously intervene on behalf of His

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<sup>6</sup> Romans 11:25: “For I would not, brethren, that ye should be ignorant of this mystery, lest ye should be wise in your own conceits; that blindness in part is happened to Israel, until the fulness of the Gentiles be come in.”

<sup>7</sup> Peter Toon, *Puritans, the Millennium and the Future of Israel: Puritan Eschatology 1600 to 1660* (Cambridge: John Clarke & Co., 1970), 24.

<sup>8</sup> *Ibid.*, 25.

ancient people and His Church and destroy their enemies and cause the full conversion and restoration of the Jewish nation which will be as a great resurrection.”<sup>9</sup>

Following Brightman, Henry Finch and William Gouge, a lawyer and lecturer respectively, outraged King James with a 1621 work titled *The Calling of the Jews*, in which the battle with Gog and Magog was rendered in contemporary political terms. “This battle will occur forty-five years after the first conversion of Jews and 395 years after the coming to power of the Ottoman Empire... with Gog and Magog destroyed the latter-day glory of the Israelite and Gentile Churches begins.”<sup>10</sup> Identifying the beginning of Ottoman governance as 1299 meant that Jewish conversion to Christianity was at hand and that the millennial battle would take place at the end of the seventeenth century. These ideas may have been subversive to English rule and more than a little speculative. However, they set two precedents. First, as members of the “Gentile Church” and Englishmen, the reformers hoped to give England a role in the millennial events. Second, they maintained that it was necessary for the Ottoman Empire to fall in order to restore Israel to its perceived former glory.

When Puritans sought refuge in America, they laid the groundwork for a new strand of eschatological thought, one in which the Old Testament came to dominate millennialism in both America and England and America took on religious significance alongside Jerusalem. By the turn of the nineteenth century the Jewish scriptures had been fully absorbed into English-speaking culture.<sup>11</sup> The idea of Israel and the rhetoric of its

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<sup>9</sup> Toon, 30. This is Toon’s summary of Brightman and is based on Revelation 20:9-12.

<sup>10</sup> Ibid., 33. Again, this is Toon’s summary of the theologians’ work.

<sup>11</sup> Sherman Lieber, *Mystics and Missionaries: The Jews in Palestine 1799-1840* (Salt Lake City: University of Utah Press, 1992), 157.

return took on both theological and political dimensions. The Unitarian Joseph Priestley called for Israel's return in part because he thought the land of Palestine was sitting fallow. Priestley called for the end of Ottoman rule despite the fact that it was England who "consistently bolstered the tottering... Empire."<sup>12</sup>

In 1809 English Protestants set up the London Society for Promoting Christianity Amongst the Jews, called the London Jews Society (LJS) for short. They sent missionaries to Palestine with the hope of converting the Jews to Christianity and ushering in the millennium. The LJS maintained a presence in Palestine until 1829, the eve of the Egyptian Muhammad Ali's invasion of the region, which made travel unsafe. When Ali re-established order, arguably much more tolerant than the Ottomans, travel became safe again. The missionaries returned by the mid-1830s.<sup>13</sup> Encouraged by the missionaries, Great Britain set up a consulate in Jerusalem in 1839.

Meanwhile American missionaries took a long hiatus from work in Palestine. The United States had no direct commercial interests in the region and so missionary work was strictly theologically-inspired.<sup>14</sup> Dogged perhaps by language barriers more than the Europeans, American missionaries paid far less attention to Jews in Palestine than they did to fellow Christians of Catholic and Orthodox backgrounds. Americans also were likely less knowledgeable on how to approach Jews since there were far fewer Jews in America than Europe. Whatever the case, American missionaries left Palestine on Easter of 1825 and did not return again until 1834.<sup>15</sup> Instead, Americans turned their

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<sup>12</sup> Lieber, 158.

<sup>13</sup> Ibid., 210, 220.

<sup>14</sup> Ibid., 160.

<sup>15</sup> Ibid., 179.

attention towards inland North America and sought to convert the Native Americans (whom many saw as remnants of the Ten Lost Tribes of Israel).

Almost as soon as Europeans touched down in America they began speculating on the origins of Native Americans. In 1648 Puritan Thomas Thorowgood wrote *Jewes in America*. In it he sought to explain why it was easy to missionize among Natives. Emphasizing the civilizing aspects of Christianity, Thorowgood reasoned that giving Natives “an Israelite past, as the ten tribes did, would help to facilitate the missionary project, since the Indians’ path to civilization would consequently be ‘shorter.’”<sup>16</sup> Over the course of the eighteenth century, as Puritanism waned and new forms of Protestantism emerged, the Ten Lost Tribes theory of Native American origins receded to the background. After the Revolution the idea of the Hebraic Indian re-emerged. It was at this point that a distinctly American brand of eschatology set the course for Pratt’s all-encompassing view of Christian, Jew, and Native American millennial harmony.

Pratt’s view, which included dual centers of power – an American New Jerusalem and the historical Jerusalem as Zion, perhaps unknowingly solved a dilemma laid out by Charles Crawford, a lawyer, poet, and Hebraic Indian proponent publishing out of Philadelphia in the early nineteenth century. As part of a work published in 1801 Crawford presented both a solution to the Native American issue in the United States

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<sup>16</sup> Zvi Ben-Dor Benite, *The Ten Lost Tribes: A World History* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2009), 174-175.

and, consequently, a problem for the idea of a future Zion in Israel. Using the prophecies found in Isaiah 43:5-6<sup>17</sup> Crawford wrote:

These prophecies should induce the whole people of America to treat the Indians with as much lenity and forbearance as possible. We reason from “the fare word of prophecy,” according to the expression of the Apostle, when we say, that all the descendants of the house of Israel, among which are many Indians, will be restored to the land of their forefathers. This will probably happen about the conclusion of the present century, somewhere near the year 1900. Many of the Indians will then relinquish their land to the white people. Upon the restoration of the Jews it is said, that the land of their forefathers will be too small to contain them and that they will wish its borders to be enlarged. “For thy waste and thy desolate places, and the land of thy destruction, shall even now be too narrow by reason of thy inhabitants.” Isaiah, xlix;19.<sup>18</sup>

Others would suggest sending Native Americans back to Israel, as part of the Ten Lost Tribes, as did Elias Boudinot, one-time president of the Continental Congress. In 1816 he published *A Star in the West; or, A Humble Attempt to Discover the Long Lost Ten Tribes of Israel, Preparatory to Their Return to Their Beloved City, Jerusalem*. The title was a play on the New Testament symbol that Jesus’ birth was foretold by a star in the east. The star in the west thus became the Native Americans as lost tribes. The return of both was necessary for the millennium.<sup>19</sup> The Book of Mormon would further merge these two ideas by depicting Jesus as actually having visited the Native Americans. In fact, the book states that one of the impending signs of Christ’s birth would be a “new star” seen by those on the Western Hemisphere, not just in the east. The star in the east

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<sup>17</sup> Isaiah 43:5-6: “Fear not: for I am with thee: I will bring thy seed from the east, and gather thee from the west; I will say to the north, Give up; and to the south, Keep not back: bring my sons from far, and my daughters from the ends of the earth.”

<sup>18</sup> Charles Crawford, *An Essay on the Propagation of the Gospel* (Philadelphia: James Humphreys, 1801), 28-29.

<sup>19</sup> Ben-Dor Benite, 182.

and the star in the west were literally one and the same according to the Book of Mormon.<sup>20</sup>

In the 1820s under the influence of Boudinot, Mordecai Manuel Noah, a prominent Jew,<sup>21</sup> and a well-known Native American author would become proponents of the Hebraic Indian theory. The Native American, William Apess, would, in fact, adopt it as part of his identity. In his *Autobiography* Pratt offers an interesting tidbit about his first mission to the Natives. By command of revelation in October 1830 Smith sent Pratt and several others on the Church's very first mission to the Lamanites.<sup>22</sup> The missionaries stopped off at an Indian nation "at or near Buffalo."<sup>23</sup> In the vicinity of Buffalo, Noah had tried to set up his Zion-like city of refuge "Ararat" in 1826. His opening ceremony was attended by local Seneca chief, Red Jacket.<sup>24</sup> In a proclamation issued at the ceremony Noah stated that "Indians, 'being in all probability the descendants of the lost ten tribes of Israel,' must be made sensible of their condition and reunited with 'their brethren.'"<sup>25</sup> Noah never went so far as to call for relocating Native Americans to Palestine, though he did express his concern that they were being pushed westward too quickly in the United States. Instead, he expressed hope that "the restoration may be near enough to include even a portion of these interesting people."<sup>26</sup>

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<sup>20</sup> Helaman 14:5 and 3 Nephi 1:21. See also Matthew 2:1-2.

<sup>21</sup> Mordecai Manuel Noah, *Discourse on the Evidences of the American Indians being the Descendants of the Lost Tribes of Israel* (New York: James Van Norden, 1837).

<sup>22</sup> Doctrine & Covenants 32:1-5.

<sup>23</sup> Pratt, *Autobiography*, 49.

<sup>24</sup> Jonathan D. Sarna, *Jacksonian Jew: The Two Worlds of Mordecai Noah* (New York: Holmes & Meier, Inc., 1981), 66.

<sup>25</sup> Sarna, *Jacksonian Jew*, 67.

<sup>26</sup> Noah, *Descendants of the Lost Tribes of Israel*, 37.

The Seneca chief Red Jacket was a nephew and rival of the famous Handsome Lake, the prophet who led a religious revitalization movement among that tribe beginning in the late 1790s.<sup>27</sup> The *Code of Handsome Lake*, as the latter's teachings came to be known, presented a highly puritanical and patriarchal resistance to white encroachment on Seneca land and society. In contrast, Red Jacket was much more open to engaging with Christians, particularly the radical Quakers.<sup>28</sup> Though Red Jacket died shortly before Pratt embarked on his mission to Buffalo, the influence of the Seneca chief may have been at work when Pratt declared in his autobiography that the missionaries had "spent part of a day with them, instructing them in the knowledge of the record of their forefathers. We were kindly received, and much interest was manifested by them on hearing this news."<sup>29</sup> Insofar as Pratt was telling the truth, he and his companions were nevertheless unsuccessful in converting the Seneca.

The best-known Native American proponent of Hebraic Indian theory was William Apess, a member of the Pequot tribe in Massachusetts and a Methodist minister. In 1829 he published an autobiography called *A Son of the Forest*. The appendix to the book contained numerous quotations from prominent proponents of Hebraic Indian theory.<sup>30</sup> Elsewhere, Apess asserted that Natives and Jesus shared a common racial identity.<sup>31</sup> In *A Son of the Forest* Apess wrote, "I humbly conceive that the natives of this

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<sup>27</sup> Matthew Dennis, *Seneca Possessed: Indians, Witchcraft, and Power in the Early American Republic* (Philadelphia: University of Philadelphia Press, 2010), 101.

<sup>28</sup> *Ibid.*, 133-134.

<sup>29</sup> Pratt, *Autobiography*, 49.

<sup>30</sup> Sandra Gustafson, "Nations of Israelites: Prophecy and Cultural Autonomy in the Writings of William Apess," *Religion & Literature* 26, no. 1 (Spring 1994): 42.

<sup>31</sup> *Ibid.*, 42.

country are the only people under heaven who have a just title to the name, inasmuch as we are the only people who retain the original complexion of our father Adam.”<sup>32</sup>

As enthusiastic as Pratt and his fellow missionaries may have been about restoring Native Americans to the Mormon brand of ancient Hebraic religion, they simply did not have the means to bring Zion about during Smith’s lifetime, either in numbers, economic terms, or political clout. Regardless of whatever interest Native Americans showed in the Mormon message, their leaders likely recognized that the Mormons could do little to help them politically and materially. By the time Pratt published *Key to Theology* the Mormons had established a permanent presence in the Great Basin. This gave Pratt a physical focus for his Theocracy and allowed him to expand on Smith’s ideas of twin centers of millennial power.

In doing so, Pratt differed from Noah, Apess, Boudinot, and other proponents of the Indians as Ten Lost Tribes theory. Rather than use Natives to push a political agenda in Palestine, bring on the millennium, procure Native-occupied land, or develop an autonomous identity, Pratt sought to create a harmonious society rich in land, agricultural cooperation, and spiritual and material advancement under the banner of the restored Gospel. It was a society that was to be shared by Natives, Jews, and Gentiles alike as the

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<sup>32</sup> William Apess, *A Son of the Forest, the Experience of William Apes, a Native of the Forest* (New York: William Apess, 1831), 21. Less explicitly, the Cherokee Elias Boudinot (who took his name directly from the previously mentioned author of *A Star in the West*) in his *Address to the Whites* brought whites and Natives together as members of the same family. In attempting to illustrate Cherokee progress in Christianizing during the 1820s, Boudinot wrote, “It needs only that the world should know what we have done in the few last years, to foresee what yet we may do with the assistance of our white brethren, and that of the common Parent of us all.” See: Elias Boudinot, *An Address to the Whites, Delivered in the First Presbyterian Church, on the 26<sup>th</sup> of May, 1826* (Philadelphia: William Geddes, 1826), 5; Boudinot’s goal was to show that Cherokee’s could co-exist, as Christians, without fully having to fully assimilate into white culture. It is not certain whether Boudinot adopted a Hebraic Indian identity like Apess. He was certainly familiar with the idea as his association with the elder Boudinot and a review of a book on Hebraic Indian theory appearing in his newspaper, the *Cherokee Phoenix*, suggests. See: *Cherokee Phoenix*, March 5, 1829.

House of Israel, one far more universal than the limited land of Palestine could provide by itself. Yet, given the political dimensions of Pratt's Theocracy, bringing this vision to fruition required real politics and help the outside world. This was not lost on Pratt, his Mormon colleagues, or Mordecai Noah for that matter.

### **The Proto-Zionist Milieu**

Zionism as a movement can be traced back to the last two decades of the nineteenth century. It was entirely European in origin; scholars point to the publication of *Judenstaat* by Theodore Herzl in 1896 and the first Zionist congresses as Zionism's beginnings. Zionism encompassed a "longing for the ancient homeland, the anomaly of Jewish existence in central and eastern Europe, and the need to find a solution to the 'Jewish question.'"<sup>33</sup> Though there would be many groups with different agendas calling themselves Zionists by the early twentieth century they all unified philosophically around those three ideas. Some Zionists were strictly political, some were atheists, while others used religious justifications for their ideals. The collective activities of these groups amounted to an increasing number of European Jews immigrating to Palestine, setting up agricultural communes called *kibbutzim*, and agitating for statehood. Ultimately, World War II and the Holocaust provided the catalyst for achieving the modern state of Israel in 1948.<sup>34</sup>

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<sup>33</sup> Laqueur, xxv.

<sup>34</sup> *Ibid.*, 88, 298-301, 461, 564.

Antecedents for Zionism existed and in some cases the Zionists themselves used their forebears as literary tools in advancing Zionist themes.<sup>35</sup> Notable was the use of the figure Mordecai Manuel Noah in works of fiction. If Zionism was mainly a political movement with occasional religious undertones, proto-Zionists largely used religious rhetoric to describe underlying political motivations. This is the case, at least, for those on the American continent, and it was in this context that Mormons carved out their distinct eschatological view of Israel.

While stationed in Nauvoo in 1841 Smith sent the missionary Orson Hyde to Jerusalem not to convert Jews to Mormonism but to bless the land for the eventual return of Israel and Judah as sovereign nations. Parley Pratt published Hyde's travelogue.<sup>36</sup> In one particularly telling statement Hyde predicted with accuracy the return of political Israel with the help of Great Britain: "It was by political power and influence that the Jewish nation was broken down, and her subjects dispersed abroad; and I will here hazard the opinion, that by political power and influence, they will be gathered and built up; and, further, that England is destined, in the wisdom and economy of heaven, to stretch forth the arm of political power, and advance in the front ranks of this glorious enterprise."<sup>37</sup> The statement was not without historical precedent. The Egyptian Muhammad Ali had controlled Palestine for nearly a decade when in 1840 the British helped secure the region's return to the Ottoman Empire.

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<sup>35</sup> Michael Weingrad, "Messiah, American Style: Mordecai Manuel Noah and the American Refuge," *AJS Review* 31, no. 1 (2007): 75-108.

<sup>36</sup> Orson Hyde, *A Voice From Jerusalem, or A sketch of the travels and ministry of Elder Orson Hyde, Missionary of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints, to Germany, Constantinople, and Jerusalem* (Liverpool: P.P. Pratt, 1842).

<sup>37</sup> O. Hyde, 14.

Various Jewish groups also took advantage of the British presence to press their own aims. Hyde observed that “I have found many Jews who listened with intense interest. The idea of the Jews being restored to Palestine is gaining ground in Europe almost every day.”<sup>38</sup> At the time individual European Jews were beginning to undertake at least hypothetical projects in search of a modern Zion for Jews. One pamphlet from 1840 even suggested the American Midwest and/or Arkansas as a possible location, something which would have made Mormons and the Jewish state next door neighbors.<sup>39</sup>

Nearly twenty years after his failed Ararat commune, Mordecai Manuel Noah had resolved that there was no other place but Palestine for the world’s Jewish population to set up Zion. Like Orson Hyde two years before him, Noah called in 1844 for British political help in restoring Israel to Jewish hands:

England must possess Egypt, as affording the only secure route to her possessions in India through the Red Sea; then Palestine, thus placed between the Russian possessions and Egypt, reverts to its legitimate proprietors, and for the safety of the surrounding nations, a powerful, wealthy, independent and enterprising people are placed there by and with the consent of the Christian powers, and with their aid and agency the land of Israel passes once more into the possession of the descendants of Abraham.<sup>40</sup>

Noah envisioned a day when Jews and Christians would praise God together on Mt. Zion. He encouraged all “Christian societies who take an interest in the fate of Israel, to assist in their restoration by aiding to colonize the Jews in Judea; the progress may be slow, but the result will be certain.”<sup>41</sup> He also called for the Ottoman Empire to grant land and

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<sup>38</sup> O. Hyde, 32.

<sup>39</sup> Laqueur, 44.

<sup>40</sup> Mordecai Manuel Noah, *Discourse on the Restoration of the Jews* (Baltimore: The Lord Baltimore Press, 1905), 4.

<sup>41</sup> *Ibid.*, 5.

legal protection for Jews in the area. “The moment the Sultan issues his Hatti Scherif, allowing the Jews to purchase and hold land in Syria, subject to the same laws and limitations which govern Mussulmans, the whole territory surrounding Jerusalem, including the villages Hebron, Safat, Tyre, also Beyroot, Jaffa, and other ports of the Mediterranean, will be occupied by enterprising Jews.”<sup>42</sup> At the time of the publication of Pratt’s *Key to Theology* in 1855, a prominent European Jew, Moses Montefiore, had begun purchasing land in Palestine with the intent of establishing Jewish settlements there, though these were not Zionist in nature or intent.<sup>43</sup> The American Rabbi Abraham Rice also considered moving to Palestine in the 1850s.<sup>44</sup>

One reason why the political ideas Hyde and Noah proposed cannot be considered Zionism is because they were not part of a unified front, but rather the individual musings of men with few or no Jewish followers. The fact of the matter was that world Jewry was far from unified in the 1840s and 1850s. Many American Jewish communities were undergoing reform, in part a product of the religious liberty they enjoyed in America.<sup>45</sup> In Europe Jews were struggling with emancipation and issues of assimilation. In some cases, Jews were only granted the full rights of citizenship in the 1840s and beyond.<sup>46</sup> Finally, in Palestine local Sephardic Jews did not necessarily share the same worldview as their Ashkenazic brethren in Europe or other Sephardic Jews from Morocco.<sup>47</sup>

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<sup>42</sup> Noah, *Restoration of the Jews*, 5.

<sup>43</sup> Arnold Blumberg, *Zion Before Zionism: 1838-1880* (Syracuse: Syracuse University Press, 1985), 97-98.

<sup>44</sup> Jonathan D. Sarna, *American Judaism: A History* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2004), 94.

<sup>45</sup> Gerald Sorin, *Tradition Transformed: The Jewish Experience in America* (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1997), 21-33.

<sup>46</sup> Laqueur, 3-39.

<sup>47</sup> Matthias B. Lehmann, “Rethinking Sephardi Identity: Jews and Other Jews in Ottoman Palestine,” *Jewish Social Studies* 15, no. 1 (2008): 86-90.

Prior to the mid-nineteenth century Judaism in America was both predominately Sephardic and lacking in rabbinical oversight. The few Ashkenazic Jews in North America typically worshipped at Sephardic synagogues; the first Ashkenazic synagogue was not established until the 1820s. Between the 1820s and 1850s the number of synagogues multiplied as established communities reproduced and immigrants from Europe arrived.<sup>48</sup> More synagogues gave rise to the demand for trained rabbis. This demand quickly restored authority to rabbis.<sup>49</sup> It also meant that rabbis had the power to make changes to liturgy, ritual, and the theological outlook of their congregations. For example, the Rabbi Isaac Meyer Wise emphatically denounced in 1850 the notions of bodily resurrection and the coming messiah.<sup>50</sup> This challenged the idea of an eschatology shared between historical Judaism and historical Christianity. It counteracted Noah's vision of Jews and Christians sharing Mt. Zion. It also meant that Jews could take up the cause of the restoration of Israel on their own terms (even if earlier calls for British help ultimately rang true) or reject it outright.

In Europe, Jewish emancipation meant "Jews were expected to dissolve their relatively autonomous communities and renounce the idea of Jewish peoplehood or nationality,"<sup>51</sup> which foresaw assimilation into local cultures, becoming Russians or Germans, for example, rather than Jews who resided in Russian or Germany. In America, many Jewish groups clung to the notion of peoplehood, based on the ethnic and

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<sup>48</sup> Sarna, *American Judaism*, 56-59.

<sup>49</sup> *Ibid.*, 93.

<sup>50</sup> *Ibid.*, 96.

<sup>51</sup> Sorin, 21.

communal bonds of “Israelites.”<sup>52</sup> Being Jewish was a point of pride and was reflected in the struggles of American Jews to formulate distinctly American brands of Judaism. In Palestine things were different.

In the Ottoman Empire during the 1840s only the local Sephardim were recognized as Jews, with legal protections and status.<sup>53</sup> As an established and legal presence, the Sephardim had economic benefits that other Jews did not. As a consequence Ashkenazic Jews who had settled there did not feel a part of the local Sephardic community.<sup>54</sup> The Ashkenazim often had to rely on money sent from Europe.<sup>55</sup> Compounding the differences were incoming Moroccan Jews. As fellow Sephardim, the Moroccans were able to exploit the capitulations the Ottoman Empire granted Sephardim. Ashkenazic Jews were denied special treatment as British influence in the region gained hold.<sup>56</sup> In terms of proto-Zionist sentiment, it was partly a spiritual and physical yearning for a distant homeland that drew European and American Jews (of whatever type) to call for a restoration of Israel, or at least the beginnings of colonization and resettlement. This nostalgia for a distant homeland was, of course, not shared by the Palestinian Sephardim, already well-established in the Holy Land, and conflicts between the various factions followed.<sup>57</sup>

Regardless of the reality of disunity, on account of the “Jewish nation [having] been scattered abroad among the Gentiles for a long period,” as Joseph Smith put it, the

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<sup>52</sup> Sarna, *American Judaism*, 89.

<sup>53</sup> Lehmann, 93.

<sup>54</sup> *Ibid.*, 96-97.

<sup>55</sup> *Ibid.*, 94.

<sup>56</sup> *Ibid.*, 101.

<sup>57</sup> *Ibid.*, 102.

rhetoric of unity was employed in order to achieve the sort of generalized storyline necessary for group movement.<sup>58</sup> Rabbi Wise always presented Judaism as a unified whole.<sup>59</sup> The early Mormon prophets and apostles did not make any distinction between Ashkenazic and Sephardic Jews. It was from Sephardic ranks that the School of the Prophets learned Hebrew. It was likely from the Ashkenazic ranks that Elder Hyde observed that Jews in Palestine were interested in the restoration of Israel. Ultimately, it was real and/or imagined blood ties between the groups that made the cause of Zion a theological, material and political necessity for Jews and Mormons alike.

### **Jews, Native Americans, and Zion in Pratt's Theology**

Parley Pratt's views on the origins of Native Americans, the Ten Lost Tribes, the restoration of Israel, and the role of Gentiles and Jews were informed by the prevailing culture described above. However, Pratt's vision for the restoration of Israel stood out as a unique set of ideas that brought all peoples and even geography together in a manner that was both informed and prescient. In order to understand his ultimate view of the restoration one must look to both his *A Voice of Warning* from 1837 and *Key to Theology*. The former work was concerned primarily with biblical prophecy both fulfilled and unfulfilled. In it Pratt laid out the foundations for twin centers of the millennium: Zion, the old Jerusalem, and the New Jerusalem in America.

Pratt was a biblical literalist. He was staunchly opposed to mysticism or the "spiritualizing" of scripture, to allegorical or metaphorical interpretations of the words,

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<sup>58</sup> O. Hyde, iv.

<sup>59</sup> Marc Lee Raphael, *The Synagogue in America: A Short History* (New York: New York University Press, 2011), 24.

stories, or symbols. This was evident in both *A Voice of Warning* and *Key to Theology*. When speaking of prophecy and its misapplication in his own day Pratt wrote in *A Voice of Warning*: “Why all this blindness? Alas! it is because of false teachers, who will tell them the Bible must be spiritualized. Others declare that these prophecies can never be understood until they are fulfilled.”<sup>60</sup> In *Key to Theology* he cited scripture itself to attack this tendency: “John the Apostle also predicted the rise and universal sway of a certain mystical power, a Babel of spiritual or religious confusion, in short — ‘Mystery, Babylon the great, the mother of harlots and abominations of the earth.’”<sup>61</sup> He was equating Mystery Babylon with sectarian Christianity of his day. In fact, several pages later Pratt put quotation marks around the word Christian (or Christianity) in order to point out that, in his view, sectarians were not living up to the meaning of the word.<sup>62</sup> Fellow Christians often seemed to him enemies rather than harbingers of the millennium.

Pratt’s literalism meant that he did not pretend to know anything that was not in scripture or revealed by modern prophets such as Joseph Smith. Pratt often paid close attention to even the most obscure passages in scripture to create entire lines of unprecedented theological reasoning. Finally, Pratt took the Book of Mormon as literal history. He used it to fill in gaps in the historical record and to set Native Americans apart from the Ten Lost Tribes. For Pratt the Jews, the lost tribes, and the Natives were each a separate entity within the House of Israel, each one presenting a particular predicament that would be solved in the millennium.

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<sup>60</sup> Pratt, *A Voice of Warning*, 52.

<sup>61</sup> Pratt, *Key to Theology*, 15.

<sup>62</sup> *Ibid.*, 18.

In *A Voice of Warning* Pratt wrote, “[t]he Jews are called dispersed, because they are scattered among the nations; but the ten tribes are called outcasts, because they are cast out from the knowledge of the nations, into a land by themselves.”<sup>63</sup> The Jews embodied the visible element of Israel while the lost tribes the hidden. Pratt confessed that he was uncertain where or who the lost tribes were. This set him apart from nearly everyone else who tried to identify the lost tribes as Native Americans, or as people living in places like Yemen or China as was popular at the time. Most tried to say the Native Americans were the lost tribes in order to show that the lost tribes had been found and thus the millennium was near. However, this notion missed out on another necessity of the millennium, one which Pratt and the Mormons acknowledged: the prophecy found in Ezekiel 37:19.<sup>64</sup>

Pratt described the Native Americans by consulting the Book of Mormon. He wrote:

Ether lived to witness their entire destruction, and deposited his record where it was afterwards found by a colony of Israelites, who came from Jerusalem six hundred years before Christ, and re-peopled America. This last colony were descendants of the tribe of Joseph; they grew and multiplied, and finally gave rise to two mighty nations. One of these nations were called Nephites – one Nephi being their founder; the other were called Lamanites, after a leader of the name Laman. The Lamanites became a dark and benighted people, of whom the American Indians are still a remnant.<sup>65</sup>

By viewing the Native Americans as descendants of Joseph, the Book of Mormon became the “stick of Joseph” found in Ezekiel. Unlike Crawford before him, who tried to

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<sup>63</sup> Pratt, *A Voice of Warning*, 37.

<sup>64</sup> Ezekiel 37:19: “Say unto them, Thus saith the Lord God; Behold, I will take the stick of Joseph, which is in the hand of Ephraim, and the tribes of Israel his fellows, and will put them with him, even with the stick of Judah, and make them one stick, and they shall be one in mine hand.”

<sup>65</sup> Pratt, *A Voice of Warning*, 95.

include Native Americans among those spoken of in Isaiah 43:5-6, Pratt let the lost tribes remain hidden until God revealed them and called them back to Israel. Pratt set the difference as such: “Now, we know that it is a question which can only be decided by Revelation, whether the aborigines of America are the seed of Jacob or not. Again, it is a matter of uncertainty where the ten tribes are, or who they are; but the new covenant [part of the restoration], whenever it makes its appearance, will reveal these things, and will leave the matter no longer in suspense; we shall then know their seed among the Gentiles, and their offspring among the people.”<sup>66</sup>

Thus for Pratt the Jews were a dispersed nation, needing to be gathered back together. The lost tribes were being kept hidden until revealed, as interpreted by prophecy. The Native Americans were the “stick of Joseph,” the “seed of Jacob,” and they were a necessary part of the millennial drama. Of the two visible remnants, neither was living by the standard which God had originally laid out for them. The Jews had originally been the keepers of the science of Theology but had lost it long ago. They had enjoyed it during three dispensations: the Patriarchal, the Mosaic, and the Jewish. However, it had been in decline and it would be restored by John the Baptist and Jesus Christ. Originally “confined” to the Jews, the restored Theology was once again lost when the Jews rejected Jesus as the messiah. “From that very time to the present — One thousand eight hundred and fifty-one of the Christian era, the voice of a Prophet has not been heard among the Jews.”<sup>67</sup> In addition, Native Americans had long since lost their keys of Theology. The Nephites “after all the blessings and privileges conferred upon

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<sup>66</sup> Pratt, *A Voice of Warning*, 43.

<sup>67</sup> Pratt, *Key to Theology*, 10-13.

them... fell into great wickedness in the third and fourth centuries of the Christian era, and finally were destroyed by the hands of the Lamanites. This destruction took place about four hundred years after Christ.”<sup>68</sup>

Despite being wayward children of God, neither Jews nor the “Lamanites” would require conversion to sectarian “Christianity,” according to Pratt. In a passage attacking sectarian presumptions, Pratt reaffirmed Jewish and Native American roles in the millennium and downplayed the need for conversion:

Woe unto you, Gentiles, who call yourselves the people of the Lord, but have made void the law of God by your traditions; for in vain do you call Lord, Lord, and do not the things which Jesus commands; in vain do ye worship him, teaching for doctrines the commandments of men. Behold; the sword of vengeance hangs over you and except you repent, it will soon fall upon you; and it will be more tolerable in that day for the Jews and heathen than for you. Behold ye flatter yourselves that the glorious day spoken of by the Prophets will be ushered in by your modern inventions and monied plans, which are got up in order to convert the Jews and heathen to the various sectarian principles now existing among yourselves ; and you expect, when this is done, to behold a millennium after your own heart. But the Jews and heathen never will be converted, as a people, to any other plan than that laid down in the Bible for the great restoration of Israel.<sup>69</sup>

Just prior to leaving for Chile in late 1851 Pratt wrote a missionary tract entitled *Proclamation! To the People of the Coasts and Islands of the Pacific*. In a section titled “Address to the Jews” Pratt encouraged but did not require that Jews get baptized in Christ’s name. The word “convert” did not appear in the tract, nor did it in *Key to Theology*. Instead, Pratt told Jews to stop sinning and “seek the God of your fathers.” He told them that if they overcame prejudice and tradition and admitted that Jesus was the messiah, “when your Messiah comes to fulfil [sic] your national redemption, and to establish his kingdom over all the earth, it will not be the first time that he has appeared

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<sup>68</sup> Pratt, *A Voice of Warning*, 96.

<sup>69</sup> *Ibid.*, 60-61.

among men, or even to your own nation.” Ultimately, Jewish acceptance of Jesus as their messiah meant they would “be prepared for less surprise and a more glorious triumph on the Mount of Olives, in the day of your returning King.”<sup>70</sup>

To the “Red Men of America,” Pratt wrote, “you are a branch of the house of Israel.”<sup>71</sup> Much as with the Jews, Pratt encouraged Native Americans to turn from sinful ways and to get baptized. However, most importantly they should recognize the Book of Mormon as “the record of your fathers” because God “purposes your restoration as a righteous branch of Israel.”<sup>72</sup> When Pratt spoke of baptism for both Jews and Native Americans he meant it simply for the remission of sins, not conversion to Mormonism as a brand of Christianity.

By the time Pratt wrote *Key to Theology* he had conceived of the restoration of Israel as a grand restoration of the “science of Theology” among all God’s people. Pratt took a cue from Acts 3:21 and saw this restoration as a “restitution of all things.”<sup>73</sup> Specifically, it meant three things: the judgment of “Mystery Babylon,” the fullness of the Gentiles, and the grafting in again of Jews and “all the natural branches of Israel.”<sup>74</sup> Mystery Babylon was the secular world and the corruption of political leaders. The fullness of the Gentiles was, according to the Book of Mormon, when the Gentile nations would hold the key of Theology, which they could in turn pass back to the Jews through

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<sup>70</sup> Pratt, *Proclamation*, 6-8.

<sup>71</sup> *Ibid.*, 8.

<sup>72</sup> *Ibid.*, 10.

<sup>73</sup> Acts 3:21: “Whom the heaven must receive until the times of restitution of all things, which God hath spoken by the mouth of all his holy prophets since the world began.”

<sup>74</sup> Pratt, *Key to Theology*, 18.

the priesthood of the LDS Church. The “natural branches of Israel” was all the House of Israel, tribes both currently lost and found, finally becoming one nation again.

The ambiguity of Pratt’s theological language meant that any sectarian differences among the Jews, such as those seen in Palestine in the 1840s, would eventually work themselves out in the millennium. Pratt’s mission through his writing was to spread the good news of the Gospel in preparation for the return of Jesus. Although contemporary political events would play a role, Pratt noted that “no individual or combined human action could obtain or restore” the science of Theology.<sup>75</sup> Divine intervention was necessary.

Pratt summed up the millennium as being “consummated by the glorious restoration of Israel and Judah to their own land and nationality, and to the true fold of God; together with the second advent of Messiah and all his Saints with him, to overthrow ‘Mystery Babylon’ and reign on the earth.”<sup>76</sup> The two-fold nature of this event, namely the roles of Israel and the Gentile Saints and the global reach of the millennial reign, meant to Pratt that there simply was not room in Palestine for all of God’s children. Palestine was the land of Jewish inheritance. The Gentiles and Natives were given North America and elsewhere. For this reason it was necessary that there be two major cities of the millennium, one in the Eastern Hemisphere and one in the Western Hemisphere. This notion was not just practical; according to Pratt it was also biblical.

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<sup>75</sup> Pratt, *Key to Theology*, 18.

<sup>76</sup> *Ibid.*, 20.

An obscure passage in Psalms 102:18-22 mentioned Zion and Jerusalem in a manner that led Pratt to see them as geographically separate.<sup>77</sup> Furthermore, the Book of Mormon declared the New Jerusalem of Revelation would be on the American continent. America was “the place of the New Jerusalem, which should come down out of heaven.”<sup>78</sup> The Jerusalem of old, from which Lehi, the patriarch of the Book of Mormon, had come, “could not be a new Jerusalem for it had been in a time of old.”<sup>79</sup> The old Jerusalem would be destroyed and rebuilt in the millennium and would take on the name of Zion, according to Pratt’s interpretation of Isaiah 60:14.<sup>80</sup> Thus, any mention of a millennial Jerusalem in the Old Testament was re-interpreted to mean the New Jerusalem to descend on North America. Whereas the Puritans had seen America as a symbolic New Jerusalem, for Pratt it was a literal New Jerusalem, or, rather, it would receive the literal New Jerusalem.

Both Zion and the New Jerusalem were tied to agricultural abundance. Like Noah, Pratt saw Palestine as a land that was desolate and needed to be replenished with flora. Pratt saw a succession of events in cosmic history that led to the constant renewal of agricultural wealth, both on earth and in the solar systems deep within the universe. In

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<sup>77</sup> Psalms 102:18-22: “This shall be written for the generation to come: and the people which shall be created shall praise the Lord. For he hath looked down from the height of his sanctuary; from heaven did the Lord behold the earth; To hear the groaning of the prisoner; to loose those that are appointed to death; To declare the name of the Lord in Zion, and his praise in Jerusalem; When the people are gathered together, and the kingdoms, to serve the Lord.” Isaiah 62:1 also speaks of Zion and Jerusalem in a similar manner.

<sup>78</sup> Ether 13:4.

<sup>79</sup> Ether 13:5.

<sup>80</sup> Isaiah 60:14: “The sons also of them that afflicted thee shall come bending unto thee; and all they that despised thee shall bow themselves down at the soles of thy feet; and they shall call thee; The city of the Lord, The Zion of the Holy One of Israel.”

tracing these events Pratt highlighted biblical prophecies of Israel's restoration that have become eerily true.

In tracing cosmic history Pratt used words like “planted” and “transplanted.” The former he used primarily in *A Voice of Warning*, while the latter became an essential word in *Key to Theology*. It is necessary to flip between the two to get a full understanding of the process Pratt saw unfolding with regard to the populating of the earth and the universe at large. The race of beings that humanity belonged to originated on the “great, central, governing planet, or sun, called Kolob until they... increased without number, and widely dispersed and transplanted from one planet to another.”<sup>81</sup> Given that Pratt saw this race as being composed of spiritual as well as fleshly bodies, two types of planets were also necessary, both spiritual and material. As “organized bodies, composed of spiritual element” increased, numerous worlds composed of spiritual element would be necessary “on which to transplant them.” In order for spiritual bodies to take up a “fleshly tabernacle” physical worlds were also necessary.<sup>82</sup> As a physical world, the earth was populated by a “Royal Planter [who] now descends from yonder world of older date, and bearing in his hand the choice seeds of the older Paradise, he plants them in the virgin soil of our new born earth. They grow and flourish there, and, bearing seed, replant themselves, and thus clothe the naked earth with scenes of beauty, and the air with fragrant incense.”<sup>83</sup>

Drawing from Genesis, Pratt points out that “in the beginning” the flora and fauna of the earth were in perfect harmony and “the earth yielded neither nauseous weeds nor

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<sup>81</sup> Pratt, *Key to Theology*, 157-158.

<sup>82</sup> *Ibid.*, 46.

<sup>83</sup> *Ibid.*, 48.

poisonous plants, nor useless thorns and thistles.”<sup>84</sup> This state of paradise ceased when the Fall of Man occurred and both plants and people dispersed and grew corrupt. When speaking of the history of humanity from the Fall down to his own day, Pratt never used the words “plant” or “transplant.” He only employed them again when speaking of the millennium and beyond. When the millennium begins, Pratt wrote,

the children of Israel shall know that their God liveth, by casting their minds upon events of recent date, which shall have transpired still more glorious and wonderful than their coming out of Egypt. They will exclaim, The Lord liveth, which recently brought the children of Israel from the north, and from all lands whither he had driven them, and hath planted them in the land of Canaan which he gave our fathers.<sup>85</sup>

Here the people Israel became an agricultural metaphor, not just gathered from the corners of the earth but deliberately “planted” by God in the land of their inheritance.

The metaphor has double meaning in the sense that it was not just the people who were planted but a return of agricultural paradise by way of the seeds the people would themselves plant.

In one of Pratt’s eerily prescient observations, he referenced Ezekiel 36:35 to illustrate what Zion will look like when Israel is restored.<sup>86</sup> The passage is a reference to the necessity of colonizing and fencing Israel off in order to maintain resources. Pratt wrote that the historical Jerusalem “is to be filled with flocks of men, and all the desolate cities of Judea are to be rebuilt, fenced and inhabited; the land is to be fenced, tilled and

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<sup>84</sup> Pratt, *A Voice of Warning*, 135.

<sup>85</sup> *Ibid.*, 38-39.

<sup>86</sup> Ezekiel 36:35: “And they shall say, This land that was desolate is become like the garden of Eden; and the waste and desolate and ruined cities are become fenced, and are inhabited.”

sown.”<sup>87</sup> But in order for this to be achieved there had to be a certain “spirit of freedom, and independence of thought” which the nineteenth century had ushered in. It had begun in Europe, was “transplanted” to America, and had by Pratt’s estimation grown to maturity in his day.<sup>88</sup>

Pratt saw the United States of America as a “favored nation” in much the same way as Mordecai Noah. It was a “land of free institutions, where [the LDS Church] could be legally developed, and claim constitutional protection, until sufficiently matured to defend itself against the convulsions, the death struggles, the agonizing throes, which precede the dissolution of the long reign of mystic tyranny.”<sup>89</sup> In essence, America was a political stepping stone on the way to a “universal and permanent theocracy” which would reign in the millennium.<sup>90</sup> Pratt saw no coincidence with the restored Gospel coming at a time “contemporary with the first dawn or development of the physical and political means” of bringing the restoration of Israel to fruition.<sup>91</sup>

*Key to Theology*, in keeping with early Mormonism’s gradual assimilation into mainstream America, did not offer any insight into how the millennial theocracy would literally come about. However, in a short story that Pratt wrote in the early 1840s, *The Angel of the Prairies*, he was explicit about how a revolution would overthrow the U.S. government and open the way for theocracy. Using the motif of an angel giving the story’s narrator a glimpse of the future, Pratt wrote:

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<sup>87</sup> Pratt, *A Voice of Warning*, 48.

<sup>88</sup> Pratt, *Key to Theology*, 72.

<sup>89</sup> *Ibid.*, 76.

<sup>90</sup> *Ibid.*, 34.

<sup>91</sup> *Ibid.*, 76.

The American system was indeed glorious in its beginning, and was founded by wise and good men, in opposition to long established abuses and oppressive systems of the Old World. But it had its weaknesses [sic] and imperfections. These were taken advantage of by wicked and conspiring men, who were unwisely placed at the head of government, and who, by a loose and corrupt administration, gradually undermined that beautiful structure. In their polluted hands justice faltered, truth fell to the ground, equity could not enter, and virtue fled into the wilderness. A blind, sectarianized and corrupt populace formed themselves into numerous mobs, overturned the laws, and put at defiance the administration thereof. These were either joined by the officers of Government or secretly winked at and encouraged by them, until the injured and persecuted friends of law and order, finding no protection or redress, were forced to abandon their country and its institutions.<sup>92</sup>

Pratt went on to describe how a remnant “who rallied to the standard of liberty” would set up a government in the West (this was written prior to the Mormon migration to the Great Basin), fight one more battle with the old regime, come out victorious and establish once and for all new laws and institutions of liberty. Millions in the world would see this and be awakened to “the force of truth, till finally, with one consent, they joined the same standard.”<sup>93</sup> The end result would be that “in one short century, the world is revolutionized; tyranny is dethroned; war has ceased forever; peace is triumphant, and truth and knowledge cover the earth.”<sup>94</sup>

Pratt’s vision may have been idealistic about the end result but he was realistic about the means of trying to reach it. He was aware that political hurdles existed, mentioning two “great enterprises” necessary before the restoration of Israel. “One of these is the Great Eastern Railway from Europe to India and China, with its branches, and accompanying telegraphic wires, centering at Jerusalem.” It is uncertain if he was actually referring to a specific plan or idea that people had talked about, but this idea

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<sup>92</sup> Pratt, *Angel of the Prairies*, 16-17.

<sup>93</sup> *Ibid.*, 18.

<sup>94</sup> *Ibid.*, 19.

echoes Noah's call for the British to establish a trade route through Palestine to ease access to India. "The other is the Great Western Railway, with its branches and accompanying telegraphic lines, from the Atlantic to the Pacific." Pratt's point was that Zion and New Jerusalem both needed to be connected to the larger world through communication lines flowing into them. In a way, it could be viewed as a play on the saying "all roads lead to Rome." In this case, all roads would lead to Zion and New Jerusalem. The old "Jerusalem will become the capitol of political government, the seat of knowledge, and the shrine of worship" while the Western Hemisphere "will naturally form its own central capitol, its Zion, or New Jerusalem, to which all its tribes and nations may perform their annual visits."<sup>95</sup>

Those tribes and nations of course included Native Americans. When Pratt wrote *A Voice of Warning* in the late 1830s he interpreted westward Indian Removal as a protective and eschatological act in which "the government of the United States has been engaged, for upwards of nine years, in gathering the remnant of Joseph – to the very place where they will finally build a New Jerusalem, a city of Zion, with the assistance of the Gentiles, who will gather them from all the face of the land."<sup>96</sup> Rather than destroying the Native Americans, or shipping them back to Palestine as Crawford had suggested, the process of establishing reservations was not just reserving the land for Natives but, in fact, reserving their very peoplehood as members of the House of Israel. The Indian Reservations were being established just outside of Missouri, where Joseph

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<sup>95</sup> Pratt, *Key to Theology*, 74-75.

<sup>96</sup> Pratt, *A Voice of Warning*, 169.

Smith had revealed the New Jerusalem would be established at Independence and where the Mormons had been gathering for several years<sup>97</sup>

All told, Pratt was able to put a theological spin on contemporary events in a way that was unique to his Mormon perspective. He saw events as part of a larger divine process that would culminate in a restoration of Zion and involved Jews, Native Americans, and Gentiles alike with enough land to satisfy their needs. Pratt differed from his contemporaries because his use of the Book of Mormon and the revelations of Joseph Smith led him to see prophecy being played out in both America and Palestine. He did not just foresee Americans helping Jews return to Palestine. He saw them establishing their own “inheritance” in the apocalyptic drama. Euro-Americans,

far separated from the practical influence [of Europe], the false glare, the empty show, or even the senseless name and titles of a self- styled or imaginary nobility, [having] their minds enlarged, their energies had full scope, and their intellectual faculties, unfettered and free, and surrounded with inexhaustible stores of unoccupied elementary riches, soon opened and developed new channels of thought, of action, of enterprise and improvement, the results of which have revolutionized the world in regard to geographical knowledge, commerce, intercommunication, transportation, travel, transmission of news, and mutual acquaintance and interchange of thought.<sup>98</sup>

This was not just a form of Manifest Destiny with Euro-Americans claiming all the land from the Atlantic to the Pacific; it was the full-scale restoration of Theology as Pratt conceived it. Pratt saw past the eventual “closing of the west” when he wrote that “some barriers yet remain to be removed, and some conquests to be achieved, such as the subjugation of Japan, and the triumph of constitutional liberty among certain nations

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<sup>97</sup> D&C 57:3: “And thus saith the Lord your God, if you will receive wisdom here is wisdom. Behold, the place which is now called Independence is the center place; and a spot for the temple is lying westward, upon a lot which is not far from the courthouse.”

<sup>98</sup> Pratt, *Key to Theology*, 73.

where mind, and thought, and religion are still prescribed by law.”<sup>99</sup> What he was talking about was the expansion of American commercial and cultural interests, and by extension the aims of the LDS Church including its eventual world-wide Theocracy, in every region of the globe. Theology laid the foundation for Theocracy. For Pratt, the successes of Euro-Americans were evidence that Theology had indeed been restored. Continued Euro-American social and economic gains would eventually lead to Pratt’s desired Theocracy, with secular advances paving the way for spiritual ones.

Part of the challenge of establishing a global theocracy that would be liberal and free in Pratt’s terms required convincing everyone that the Mormon message contained the truth of the universe. Nowhere did Pratt insist that people would be forcibly converted to Mormonism. In fact, he took it for granted that people will know the truth when they see it, regardless of any previous reservations. That is to say, Pratt’s Mormon Theocracy would set a standard of freedom that would naturally draw people to it. In the meantime, however, persuasion was necessary to bring sufficient numbers into the Mormon fold to give momentum to the movement. Whether Mormon converts came from other Christian sects, believed in other religions, or no religion at all, Pratt saw them as prospects for conversion to Mormonism. Pratt also saw competition and threats to the missionary work. Above all, the Spiritualists gave cause for alarm. In fact, Pratt knew of and warned about flirtations with Spiritualism. To combat the threat, he engaged directly with Spiritualist ideology and, most importantly, appropriated key parts of it into the Mormon theology he constructed in *Key to Theology*.

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<sup>99</sup> Pratt, *Key to Theology*, 74.

### CHAPTER 3

## **SPIRITUAL PHILOSOPHY: PRATT'S COSMOLOGY AND THE INFLUENCE OF SPIRITUALISM**

### **Spiritualist Origins**

Along the missionary trail, Parley Pratt encountered a plurality of religions and philosophical ideas. Many of his literary tracts addressed specific groups as he sought to individualize his message to persuade people to convert. Often his message was that, unlike Mormonism, the beliefs of different religions only captured a partial truth about life, salvation, and the cosmos. Accordingly, Pratt highlighted those partial truths and inserted them into his version of Mormon theology. This was easier with some groups than others. With other Christians, Mormonism already shared eschatological beliefs of the impending millennial return of Christ. With Judaism, at least in Pratt's view, Mormons shared an evolving desire for the restoration of Israel in the land of Palestine, in both prophetic and political terms. When it came to cosmology – the view of the universe, its workings, purpose and all its parts including planets, stars, and otherworldly or supernatural beings – Mormonism had no equal in contemporary Western religion until the advent of Spiritualism. Spiritualist cosmology in the late 1840s and early 1850s presented a unique challenge to Pratt specifically and Mormon belief generally because it offered a similar view of the universe without the rigidity of Mormon practice. Indeed, a few Mormons in California threatened and/or fell into apostasy on account of their experiences with Spiritualism. This chapter argues that Pratt was familiar with the works of Spiritualist Andrew Jackson Davis, and aware of Spiritualist influences on Mormons

in California, and that he consequently appropriated certain Spiritualist ideas for use in his biblical-based Mormon theology to counteract the threat he saw in Spiritualism.

The nineteenth century Spiritualist movement in the United States was founded in the late 1840s. In 1847 Andrew Jackson Davis, known as the Poughkeepsie Seer, published *The Principles of Nature*, which he claimed he dictated to a scribe while in a clairvoyant state. In the book he expounded a system of spiritual communication, progression, and heavenly spheres the individual spirit passes through on its way to perfection. Later that year the more gimmicky side of the movement began when the sisters Kate and Margaret Fox, also from New York, claimed, in the words of one scholar, that “a series of mysterious raps that showered from the walls and floors and even thin air, seemingly without source,” had occurred within their father’s house.<sup>1</sup> Interest grew until the following spring when Kate Fox addressed one of these raps directly with the specific name of a deceased individual, thereby giving the so-called spirit-rappings a personality. The idea of contacting deceased individuals directly through mediums such as the Fox Sisters, or later Cora Scott, intrigued many people throughout the 1850s and beyond. Some would continue with claims of mediumship, while others like Davis worked out a more philosophical brand of Spiritualism.<sup>2</sup>

A common thread running through Spiritualism was its individualistic tendency. Spiritualism gave individuals, particularly female mediums, agency and a public presence that they never had before. It allowed people to break from organized religious bodies

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<sup>1</sup> Robert Cox, *Body and Soul: A Sympathetic History of American Spiritualism* (Charlottesville: University of Virginia Press, 2003), 6.

<sup>2</sup> Robert W. Delp, “Andrew Jackson Davis: Prophet of American Spiritualism,” *The Journal of American History*, 54, no. 1 (June 1967): 50-54.

and dogma. Everyone was allowed to participate in the rituals. The movement's most radical spiritual innovation was its claimed direct communication between living spirits and those beyond the grave. Furthermore, "Spiritualists espoused a stunning range of social views, united by opposition to neither sect nor aristocrat per se but rather to the manner in which these were conceived as contributing to the dissolution of social bonds."<sup>3</sup> Among many other things this included abuse and gender inequality in marriage, alcoholism, the emerging political party movements, capitalism, and slavery.<sup>4</sup>

One of the pitfalls of Spiritualism was its claim that it was compatible with science and that science would ultimately prove its claims as true. Emerging on the heels of natural philosophy and at the dawn of modern science, early Spiritualist rhetoric sounds today like a mish-mash of primitive materialism, pseudo-scientific abstraction and (sometimes accurate) cosmological speculation. Taking cues from the Swedish mystic Emanuel Swedenborg, whose visions of a multi-tiered heaven influenced Davis's ideas, and Franz Mesmer, known for discovering hypnotism and espousing the idea of "animal magnetism," Spiritualists developed notions of cerebral attraction between bodies, spirits, and the cosmos at large.

In a section deleted from the 1915 edition of *Key to Theology*, Pratt criticized Emanuel Swedenborg and his followers as well as Davis and the concepts of "magnetism" popular at the time he composed the book in the mid-nineteenth century. It was "animal magnetism" that Pratt found ludicrous and lacking spiritual substance. However, despite his dismay over such concepts Pratt turned right around and employed

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<sup>3</sup> Cox, 79.

<sup>4</sup> Ibid., 79.

Spiritualist rhetoric such as “second sight” and “clairvoyance” when describing how one communicated with spiritual beings. Pratt believed that “the earth and other planets of a like sphere, have their inward or spiritual spheres, as well as their outward, or temporal. The one is peopled by temporal tabernacles, and the other by spirits. A vail [sic] is drawn between the one sphere and the other, whereby all the objects in the spiritual sphere are rendered invisible to those in the temporal.”<sup>5</sup> It required some means of communication to be able to transcend one sphere for the other, and for this concept Pratt employed the vocabulary and concepts of Spiritualism suitable in a Mormon treatise.

Pratt’s engagement with Spiritualism came when he was in California during the early 1850s as president of the California and Pacific missions of the LDS Church. He had lengthy stays in San Francisco and was in constant contact with the Mormon settlement at San Bernardino, headed by fellow Apostles Amasa Lyman and Charles Rich. Lyman would be known for his experimentation with Spiritualism in 1853 and after. Further north in the San Francisco area public displays of Spiritualist activity periodically caught the attention of local newspapers.

Pratt began writing *Key to Theology* in 1851, completed the manuscript in 1853, and published it in 1855. Pratt’s direct engagement with particular individuals involved in Spiritualism during this time was limited. However, circumstantial and textual evidence supports the notion that *Key to Theology* was written not just as an introduction to Mormon doctrine but also as a rebuttal to Spiritualist tendencies among lapsed Mormons, which Pratt witnessed in California. Shortly after Pratt began to write *Key to Theology* in 1851, San Francisco experienced its first wave of Spiritualist activity.

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<sup>5</sup> Pratt, *Key to Theology*, 126-127.

Within a month of Pratt publicly speaking out against Spiritualism at the April 1853 General Conference (a sermon which was published, perhaps in San Francisco, as its own individual tract<sup>6</sup>), San Francisco saw a second wave of activity. Within a year of *Key to Theology*'s publication in 1855 the city saw its third and most organized wave of Spiritualist activity in the 1850s. There can be little doubt that Pratt was aware of what was going on. This chapter argues that Pratt's experience of and concern with the detrimental effects of Spiritualism influenced and inspired his intellectual journey that led to the creation of *Key to Theology*. The challenge of Spiritualism placed a heavy burden on Pratt's construction of his cosmological ideas, and the burden of this chapter is to explain how and why this was so.

### **Spiritualism in California**

One of the earliest public observations of a Spiritualist presence in California was a book review of Davis's *The Great Harmonia* in the *Alta California* on August 1, 1850. The reviewer was not impressed with the book, stating that "it tries one's patience sorely to read one of these humbug productions, much of their contents being so supremely ridiculous, and giving such evident token of insanity."<sup>7</sup> In November 1852 there was an announcement in the *Alta California* of the reception of the magazine *Spiritual Telegraph*.<sup>8</sup> This magazine had been started by Samuel Bryon Brittan and Charles Partridge that year in New York City and would become one of the most widely read

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<sup>6</sup> Givens and Grow, 400. There are question marks following the place and date of publication on this list of Pratt's published works.

<sup>7</sup> *Alta California*, August 1, 1850.

<sup>8</sup> *Ibid.*, November 16, 1852.

Spiritualist periodicals of the 1850s. The *Alta California* mockingly called the magazine's layout "magnetically attractive." The announcement included a commentary by a minister who decried Spiritualism as a threat not yet fully matured, as "Chemistry was once alchemy; astronomy was astrology."<sup>9</sup>

Beginning in May 1853 the *Alta California* observed a flurry of local interest in Spiritualism. Letters written by an advocate appeared that month under the titles "Spiritual Predictions" and "Clairvoyance and Spiritualism." The former concerned itself with a particular and rather uninteresting clairvoyant prediction and mentioned Andrew Jackson Davis along the way.<sup>10</sup> The latter expanded upon the visionary powers of Emanuel Swedenborg, suggesting that his eighteenth-century prophecies were being fulfilled by nineteenth-century Spiritualism. The author claimed to have read "a communication which came from the spirit of Martin Luther, through a clairvoyant medium, at a circle where I was present on Sunday evening last." He concluded by observing that such spiritual manifestations had "extended to Europe as well as California."<sup>11</sup> The growth of local interest in Swedenborg is corroborated by the *Alta California*, which announced in September 1854 that a Swedenborgian church was being established in Santa Clara and that the "congregation of the 'New Jerusalem Church' have been worshipping regularly in San Francisco for a long time."<sup>12</sup> Pratt, who negatively criticized Swedenborg by name in *Key to Theology*, was residing in San

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<sup>9</sup> *Alta California*, November 16, 1852.

<sup>10</sup> *Ibid.*, May 16, 1853.

<sup>11</sup> *Weekly Alta California*, May 21, 1853.

<sup>12</sup> *Alta California*, September 30, 1854.

Francisco at that time, and given his missionary activities it is not unlikely that he came into contact with practicing Swedenborgians.

The above letters were followed by the *Weekly Alta California*'s announcement that May 1853 marked the one year anniversary of the first “‘spiritual’ rappings, table-tiltings, furniture movings, hand-writings and similar performances” first occurring in the city. The reporter called it “mysterious” that a revival of these activities should take place one year later and called for them to be taken more seriously. Suggesting that Spiritualism could be a positive antidote to the “exciting, disorganizing, and unhealthful influences” upon the “public mind,” the writer argued that it should not have been met “with such weapons as sarcasm and contempt.”<sup>13</sup>

Spiritualism was and would remain a predominantly east coast and mid-western phenomenon. Observed activity in San Francisco waned between 1853 and late 1855, when on the final day of the year the *Daily Evening Bulletin* culled a report from the *Union Democrat* about a recent, week-long preoccupation with table-tipping by “distinguished individuals” in the Sonora area.<sup>14</sup> There was apparently enough of a local market for Spiritualism that on January 2, 1856, an advertisement appeared in the *Bulletin* for copies of a Spiritualist lecture from New York City for sale at area booksellers.<sup>15</sup> The advertisement also mentioned the availability of Spiritualist books, both “pro and con,” at Valentine & Co. The next day the *Bulletin* announced that they

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<sup>13</sup> *Weekly Alta California*, May 28, 1853.

<sup>14</sup> *Daily Evening Bulletin*, December 31, 1855.

<sup>15</sup> *Ibid.*, January 2, 1856.

had obtained a copy of the aforementioned lecture. They declined to comment as to its contents but made the “supposition” that it was “all humbug.”<sup>16</sup>

Towards the end of January 1856 Valentine & Co. advertised a meeting at the bookseller’s house “for the purpose of forming circles.”<sup>17</sup> Roughly a week later the *Daily Democratic State Journal* reported that there were several circles and mediums in Sacramento that “always succeed in getting spirits to converse with them.”<sup>18</sup> Locals began lecturing publicly on the subject of Spiritualism. Announcements of these lectures appeared so regularly in the *Bulletin* in March that by April 7 the newspaper remarked that “the subject is now exciting considerable interest in our city.”<sup>19</sup> Several days later the *State Journal* made a similar observation: “there seems to be quite a mania for Spiritualism at San Francisco.”<sup>20</sup> A Stockton paper reported also on a Spiritualist lecture in Sacramento in early April.<sup>21</sup>

Interest in Spiritualism reached a peak in San Francisco and Sacramento in March 1856, after which it quickly died down. No announcements of lectures appeared after April. By September of that year the bookseller Valentine & Co. advertised a lengthy list of Spiritualist works, including major treatises by Andrew Jackson Davis and S.B. Brittan, selling at “reduced prices,” likely a surplus of stock on account of reduced demand.<sup>22</sup> Interest did not wane completely, however, for in February of 1857 the

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<sup>16</sup> *Daily Evening Bulletin*, January 3, 1856.

<sup>17</sup> *Ibid.*, January 21, 1856.

<sup>18</sup> *Daily Democratic State Journal*, January 29, 1856.

<sup>19</sup> *Daily Evening Bulletin*, April 7, 1856.

<sup>20</sup> *Daily Democratic State Journal*, April 11, 1856.

<sup>21</sup> *Weekly San Joaquin Republican*, April 12, 1856.

<sup>22</sup> *Daily Evening Bulletin*, September 10, 1856.

*Bulletin* ran an announcement for a local paper in Marysville dedicated to Spiritualism.<sup>23</sup> On March 2, 1857, the publishers of the *Weekly Spiritualist*, as the paper would be known, advertised for subscriptions.<sup>24</sup> It was ultimately “met with such faint encouragement that its publication was discontinued the following May.”<sup>25</sup> Spiritualism would not again gain public attention in California until the late 1860s, after the Civil War.

During the first half of the 1850s San Francisco was plagued by civil and social unrest. Even though recent scholars have shown that, although the crime rate was not extraordinarily high, there was a public perception that crime was rampant. Furthermore, the issue was not entirely violence but the lack of punishment for criminals.<sup>26</sup> Perceptions of the legal process as slow and uncertain created a demand for extralegal justice in the form of vigilante violence and lynchings. The two foremost episodes of extralegal violence in San Francisco were the famous Vigilance Committees in the summers of 1851 and 1856. However, as Roger Lotchin pointed out, there were recurring panics over crime waves throughout the 1850s. One peak occurred in May 1852, when vigilantism threatened to break out again, and concern over crime also broke out in November 1852 and “persisted well into 1853.” In the early months of 1856, just

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<sup>23</sup> *Daily Evening Bulletin*, February 14, 1857.

<sup>24</sup> *Ibid.*, March 2, 1857.

<sup>25</sup> Thompson and West, *History of Yuba County California* (1879), <http://www.yubaroots.com/history/hycch-xxiv.htm> (accessed April 13, 2013).

<sup>26</sup> Philip J. Ethington, *The Public City: The political construction of urban life in San Francisco, 1850-1900* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1994), 98.

before the organization of the San Francisco Vigilance Committee, “widespread complaints about waves of lawbreaking” filled the city’s newspaper columns.<sup>27</sup>

It is during these periods of violence that Spiritualism made its greatest public appearances in San Francisco. The first notice of Spiritualism’s appearance in May 1852 coincided with the Vigilante threat of that month. The revival of Spiritualist activity in May 1853 came on the heels of rising violence. The late 1855 mention of Spiritualist activity came in the wake of the November murder of a United States marshal by Charles Cora, the outcry over which set in motion the events that eventually led to the Vigilance Committee. Growing interest in Spiritualism in the early months of 1856 paralleled the intensified political climate before the official mobilization of the committee. If Spiritualism provided an escape for some from the violence in between the Vigilance Committees it was interestingly absent from the public view from July to September 1856, the exact months of the committee’s activities that year. Once vigilance activity ran its course and Spiritualism again was mentioned in the newspaper, it was as an attempt to sell off related literature at reduced prices, suggesting that the Vigilance Committee provided a more effective outlet for unrest than Spiritualism.

A possible explanation of the parallels between crime, disorder, and vigilantism, on the one hand and Spiritualist activity on the other was the liberating nature of both. They can be seen in some fashion as polar extremes, the former being a physical extreme and the latter a spiritual or religious extreme. The physical extreme was the result of a

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<sup>27</sup> Roger W. Lotchin, *San Francisco, 1846-1856: From Hamlet to City* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1974), 194.

perceived lack of law and order.<sup>28</sup> Lotchin noted that “San Francisco with its numerous temptations, [and] its relative absence of traditions and restraints... was morally a very dangerous place.”<sup>29</sup> Spiritualism was the outlet for those not inclined to physical violence. It provided an avenue for participants to reach for something beyond the veil, so to speak, to transcend the conditions of public life in the city.

Vigilante violence and spiritual communications carried participants above social chaos and gave individuals agency without demanding adherence to institutional structure. In this frontier city, experiments with vigilantism and spirituality can be understood as reactions to uncertainty, not to mention organized religion’s failure to establish moral order. When circumstances heated to a boiling point, extremes in either direction appeared to relieve the pressure. When conceptions of social breakdown subsided both extremes declined. That Spiritualism faded during and after the Vigilance Committee of 1856 (it would not regain strength until after the Civil War) is perhaps explained by the committee’s slogan: “No creed. No party. No sectional issues.”<sup>30</sup> Whether or not one supported the violence of the movement it is likely that this notion inspired many to abandon religion altogether. Similarly, Spiritualism served as a means of social and political engagement, an initial step in self-liberation. When a movement came along that gave dissatisfied people agency and a means of controlling their lives without churches and the supernatural they moved farther and farther away from matters

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<sup>28</sup> It was also perhaps due in part to the gender imbalance which created a vacuum in the domestic life of San Francisco males. See: Ethington, 59-62.

<sup>29</sup> Lotchin, 208.

<sup>30</sup> Ethington, 126.

of the spirit. It was precisely this danger that the missionary and theologian Parley Pratt faced during the period he was writing and publishing his *Key to Theology*.

### **Mormon Engagement with Spiritualism**

Parley Pratt first arrived in San Francisco in July 1851 in the aftermath of the first Vigilance Committee. One of the first orders of business he attended to was the excommunication from the LDS Church of Samuel Brannan, the owner of the *Alta California* and a strong voice in local politics. Brannan had helped lead the committee and had participated in the execution of several people. Pratt excommunicated Brannan from the Church for “unchristianlike conduct” as well as “combining with lawless assemblies to commit murder and other crimes.”<sup>31</sup> Brannan’s excommunication was effective on September 1. Shortly after, Pratt was off to his mission in Chile.

While in San Francisco, Pratt took to preaching in order to “reclaim lapsed Mormons and to attract converts.”<sup>32</sup> Among the early settlers in the San Francisco area prior to the Gold Rush were some 200 Mormons who had arrived by ship from the eastern United States as part of the Mormon migration west.<sup>33</sup> Many of these had fallen away, and Pratt engaged in rebaptisms of those who wanted to rededicate themselves to the Church. Among them was Charles Wandell, who would thereafter go on a mission to Australia. One thing which Pratt and Wandell had in common was that they both went to missionize in countries whose citizens had been victims of vigilante violence: Chileans and Australians (the former the victims of the latter). Another was that Wandell would

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<sup>31</sup> Bagley, 297.

<sup>32</sup> Givens and Grow, 299.

<sup>33</sup> Lotchin, 8.

act as a scribe for Pratt during Pratt's 1851 sojourn in San Francisco. Pratt sent Wandell on his mission to Australia with a newly-penned tract entitled *Proclamation! To the People of the Coasts and Islands of the Pacific; Of Every Nation, Kindred and Tongue*. The rhetoric was standard fare, biblically laden with little theological exegesis beyond arguing for Christ's salvific powers restored through the LDS Church. Wandell noted in a letter appearing in the *Deseret News* in 1858 that Pratt was, in late 1851, "then writing his Key to Theology" but made no mention of the *Proclamation!* tract.<sup>34</sup> He did mention acting as "amenuensis" for Pratt but did not specify which piece of writing he helped write, though it was likely the *Proclamation!* tract since Wandell published it himself.

Givens and Grow, Pratt's biographers, place the commencement of work on *Key to Theology* in August 1851 and state that it was completed by May 1853. Pratt was in Chile from early November 1851 to March 1852. He returned to San Francisco by May 1852 and remained there until he returned to Utah in October of that year. With little to do on account of severe restrictions on missionary activity in Chile, Pratt likely bided his time working on *Key to Theology*. He would have gone into writing it with the violence and disorder of San Francisco fresh in mind, which might in part explain the book's emphasis on harmony and order, an inversion of the society Pratt witnessed in San Francisco. Those areas most lacking order in reality took on structure and added importance in Pratt's thinking; for example, polygamy as an answer to prostitution.<sup>35</sup> *Key to Theology's* Spiritualist-infused rhetoric, philosophy, and cosmology similarly might have come out of the leisurely engagement that down time in Chile afforded Pratt.

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<sup>34</sup> *Deseret News*, March 3, 1858.

<sup>35</sup> Pratt, *Key to Theology*, 165-166.

Davis's writings were known and read in San Francisco, and Pratt could have taken copies with him on his journey. This would explain Pratt's intellectual engagement with Davis's writings in *Key to Theology*. It was an intellectual engagement with books that Pratt would not have had time for had he actually been engaged in missionizing in Chile.

*Key to Theology* was a universe-spanning work. Pratt had written of embodied spirits and even the plurality of worlds in previous writings but not of a complete universal order of related beings based on a perceived ability to communicate between them. Only one other published piece by Pratt compares to *Key to Theology's* focus on cosmological communication. This was a transcript of his April 1853 General Conference address, given while he was writing *Key to Theology*, in which he spoke of the concept of spiritual communication and explicitly denounced Spiritualist practices.<sup>36</sup> *Key to Theology* was a product of its time and place, and that was the social and intellectual world of San Francisco in the early 1850s. Even if parts of the book were written in Chile, Pratt was still engaged with what he left behind simply because there was little new to engage. If the remarks about Spiritualism in his April 1853 address are any testament, it was a world Pratt had no problem reimmersing himself in as soon as he arrived back in California.

In April 1854 Pratt was appointed president of the Pacific mission for a second term. He took up residence in San Francisco as a base for his operation to establish new "stakes" in the region.<sup>37</sup> The most well-established Mormon settlement at the time was in San Bernardino in Southern California, and it was here that Amasa Lyman first

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<sup>36</sup> Parley P. Pratt, "Spiritual Communication," in *Journal of Discourses: Vol. 1* (Liverpool: F.D. and S.W. Richards, 1854), 6-15.

<sup>37</sup> Givens and Grow, 339.

encountered Spiritualism. Spiritualism would play a much greater role in Lyman's eventual apostasy in the late 1860s, but two incidents from 1853 illustrate his engagement with Spiritualism at this early stage. The first occurred in June 1853 when Lyman's wife Marion fell ill and was healed by a local "spiritualist-Mormon" named John Brown.<sup>38</sup> The other was a séance held on August 4 of the same year. With fellow Saint Calvin Reed acting as a medium, participants reportedly communicated with the spirit of Hyrum Smith, the prophet Joseph's slain brother, who warned Lyman to accept some doctrines while rejecting others.<sup>39</sup>

By September 1, 1853, Charles Rich, Lyman's fellow mission leader at San Bernardino, started preaching about "spiritual communication," echoing Pratt's General Conference sermon earlier that year. Rich wrote to Brigham Young to report that there had been "curious manifestations" at the settlement but that most of the Saints were content with Mormon teachings. In January 1854 the *Deseret News* reported that Davis's Spiritualist teaching was leading Christians astray.<sup>40</sup> Young certainly had plenty of reasons to send Pratt back to California, but among them would have been Pratt's direct knowledge and interest in the dangers that Spiritualist activity posed to the Mormon settlements.

The presence of Andrew Jackson Davis's books in San Bernardino can be traced to at least 1853. A Mormon missionary returned from Tahiti named Benjamin F. Grouard settled in that town and possessed some of the clairvoyant's books. A non-

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<sup>38</sup> Edward Leo Lyman, *Amasa Mason Lyman: Mormon Apostle and Apostate, A Study in Dedication* (Salt Lake City: University of Utah Press, 2009), 205.

<sup>39</sup> Lyman, 206. Lyman's biographer also concluded that if he had been reading the works of Andrew Jackson Davis at this time they did not have a big impact on his thought until much later.

<sup>40</sup> *Ibid.*, 207.

Mormon named Sarah Pratt (no relation to Parley) also discussed Davis while residing there.<sup>41</sup> Parley Pratt was in San Francisco in early 1855 when he received word that his *Key to Theology* had been published in England.<sup>42</sup> By June Pratt was back in Utah and had ordained George Q. Cannon as his successor as Pacific mission president.<sup>43</sup> In July Lyman visited San Francisco and, while attending a dinner at the residence of the San Francisco branch president, brought up the subject of spirit communication. It reportedly kept the attendees engaged in discussion until a late hour of the night.<sup>44</sup> The discussion could have been strictly on account of Lyman's experiences with Spiritualist practice but just as easily could have been inspired by Pratt's book since it was hot off the presses at that point. Indeed, it very well could have fused the two since many of the attendees were staunch Mormons, and Pratt's book offered a very Mormon take on spirit communication.<sup>45</sup>

Even with Pratt out of the picture, the 1856 San Francisco outbreak of Spiritualist activity did not go unnoticed by Mormon authorities. After several years of preparation, George Q. Cannon (who would go on to publish an edition of Pratt's *Key to Theology*) commenced publication on February 23, 1856, of an LDS newspaper in San Francisco called the *Western Standard*.<sup>46</sup> A month later the newspaper ran an article titled "Thoughts on Spiritism." Though more polemical than objective reporting, the article did contain one direct observation:

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<sup>41</sup> Lyman, 208.

<sup>42</sup> Givens and Grow, 339.

<sup>43</sup> *Ibid.*, 365.

<sup>44</sup> Lyman, 208.

<sup>45</sup> *Ibid.*, 208-209.

<sup>46</sup> George Q. Cannon, *Writings from the Western Standard* (Liverpool: George Q. Cannon, 1864), 1. This book is a collection of writings personally collected by Cannon for the purpose of saving them for posterity. Copies of the papers were otherwise at risk of being permanently lost.

The subject of Spiritism has received much attention for the last few weeks in this city, and several public lectures have been delivered, setting forth its merits and demonstrating its philosophy. This subject seems to be attracting the notice of many of the intellectual and learned members of the community, and is not received with any particular disfavor by those who do not fully endorse it as correct.<sup>47</sup>

This was published a good week before the other area papers picked up on the trend. If Mormons had more to lose from apostasy to Spiritualism, they had something to gain by exploiting the current interest in it if they could convincingly refute it. This also illustrates that Mormons were keeping a much closer eye on religious developments in San Francisco than the mainstream press and were ready to renounce anything they deemed incorrect. Indeed, Cannon's criticisms of Spiritualism indicate his familiarity with its practices and their relationship to the Bible and Mormonism.

Cannon's paper engaged Spiritualism in a way that followed the pattern of Pratt's *Key to Theology*: it took Spiritualist concepts and reinserted them into a biblical context in order to show Mormonism's superiority. The initial article was followed up a week later by another titled "Thoughts on Spiritism Continued."<sup>48</sup> The essential thesis of the twin articles was that "Spiritism" could not possibly be true because there was simply no form or system attached to it. In contrast, Mormonism included the basic ideas of Spiritualism within a divinely ordained cosmic system.

Of the articles Cannon chose to include in his compilation of *Western Standard* writings, none took competing religions as seriously as the "Spiritism" articles, illustrating the unique challenge Spiritualism posed. If Pratt had been keenly aware of Spiritualist undercurrents among Latter-day Saint communities (or communities

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<sup>47</sup> Cannon, 51. The article was originally published on March 29, 1856.

<sup>48</sup> *Ibid.*, 54.

containing Latter-day Saints) Cannon would have been privy to the same notions.

Cannon was one of Pratt's closest confidants while Pratt was president of the Pacific missions and was in close communication with him. While on mission to the Sandwich Islands, Cannon exchanged correspondence with Pratt. He heard Pratt preach in San Francisco when his mission ended and was later hired as scribe for the writing of Pratt's autobiography.<sup>49</sup> Cannon would have been well aware of what Pratt thought about Spiritualism. In this sense, the "Spiritism" articles represented a continuation of thought among LDS authorities who were removed from Utah. Brigham Young certainly had a number of reasons for calling the faithful back to Utah a year later. The threat of apostasy, of apostasy to Spiritualism specifically, was one that is largely overlooked.

It was at this time that one of Mormonism's most important contemporary apostasies occurred in San Francisco, that of John Hyde. The example of Hyde was in many ways a manifestation of Pratt's fear of Spiritualist teachings influencing apostasy. Hyde had been selected to serve as a missionary in Hawaii and prepared for his mission by spending several months in San Francisco beginning in May 1856. He left for Hawaii that September, "prepared to serve a mission in the Hawaiian Islands. By the time he reached Hawaii, he had changed his mind."<sup>50</sup> The *Western Standard* reported on Hyde's apostasy on November 29, 1856. The report gives one hint that Hyde had entertained feelings of discontent before embarking on the mission. Along with a general disgust with Mormon doctrine, Hyde was specifically angered about polygamy which "he now declares that he knew, for some time previous to leaving Utah, to have originated in the

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<sup>49</sup> Givens and Grow, 301 and 347-349.

<sup>50</sup> Lynne Watkins Jorgenson, "John Hyde, Jr., Mormon Renegade," *Journal of Mormon History* Vol. 17, no. 1 (1991): 120.

lusts of Joseph Smith, and to be degrading to women and productive of heart-wringings, anguish and despair.”<sup>51</sup> Cannon’s article gives no clue as to what, if anything, Hyde replaced his Mormonism with, but in late 1857 Hyde accused Pratt of borrowing freely from the philosophy of Davis in *Key to Theology*.<sup>52</sup>

Hyde’s familiarity with Spiritualist teachings is further corroborated by his publication in 1859 of a biography of Emanuel Swedenborg.<sup>53</sup> Hyde eventually moved to England, where he became a respected Swedenborgian minister.<sup>54</sup> Even if he had not been a committed follower in the late 1850s, Hyde clearly was familiar with Swedenborg’s ideas, possibly through the writings of Davis – both professed a spiritual marriage ideal – and perhaps had engaged with the Swedenborgians earlier in San Francisco. The Mormon practice of polygamy had been known publicly only since 1852. Pratt dedicated an entire chapter to polygamous marriage and family life in *Key to Theology*, making it one of the first major treatments of the practice.<sup>55</sup> Hyde acknowledged having read Pratt’s book and possibly found something in Pratt’s words he did not like.

The connection between Hyde’s distaste for Mormon polygamy and Swedenborg’s ideas on love and marriage can be found in Hyde’s biography of Swedenborg. He wrote of Swedenborg’s denunciation of polygamy as an example of “human degradation from sexual purity through the horrors of its various stages, until is

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<sup>51</sup> Cannon, 256-257.

<sup>52</sup> Hyde, *Mormonism*, 135.

<sup>53</sup> Roger R. Ekins, *Defending Zion: George Q. Cannon and the California Mormon Newspaper Wars of 1856-1857* (Spokane, WA: The Arthur H. Clark Company, 2002), 137.

<sup>54</sup> *Ibid.*, 136.

<sup>55</sup> Pratt, *Key to Theology*, 159.

reached the lowest abyss of infamy, when men and women become only he-devils and she-devils, their whole life grown to be a raging lust, seeking alone to drag down every other human being to hell.”<sup>56</sup> Marriage, in Hyde’s view, was meant to obtain a particular balance between masculine and feminine elements, and that was possibly only in a monogamous relationship.

Cannon’s article on Hyde went on to try and prove that Hyde could not have already refuted Mormonism, for why would Hyde travel all the way to Hawaii and back if he already knew he was finished with the religion? Unacknowledged by Mormon scholars is the fact that Hyde was in San Francisco for the entire duration of the Vigilance Committee of 1856. Whether or not Hyde took part in its activities is not known, but the *zeitgeist* of the movement – no creeds, parties or sectional issues – very easily could have affected him. Whatever the case was, Hyde was in a position to entertain new ideas, and his several months in San Francisco were also in the immediate wake of the heightened interest in Spiritualism. As Mormons such as Pratt gained confidence in the practice of polygamy and became increasingly vocal about it, Hyde became more aware of what was happening in the religion he had chosen.

Givens and Grow observed that between 1846 and 1855 few Mormon plural marriages took place but that they picked up towards the mid-1850s. Pratt fell into this pattern, taking additional wives in the mid-1840s and not again until 1853 and 1855.<sup>57</sup> In 1854 Pratt’s wife Belinda published a widely-read tract defending the practice of polygamy, and Pratt published a short tract on polygamy in 1856, the last major

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<sup>56</sup> John Hyde, *Emanuel Swedenborg: A Lecture* (Philadelphia: New Church Tract and Publication Society), 110.

<sup>57</sup> Givens and Grow, 321

publication of his life.<sup>58</sup> In the years leading up to Hyde's apostasy, Mormons led by the Pratts publicized and rationalized their marriage practices. Previously, polygamy had been a known but relatively non-threatening practice. With the practice gaining traction in Mormon life, Hyde, who disagreed with the practice, began to look for alternative religions that offered similar cosmological teachings but that were not tied down by such dogmatic order as Pratt had written about in *Key to Theology*. Hyde found a spiritual ally in Spiritualism and its denunciation of polygamy was the door into its various teachings.

In his lecturing in Hawaii, Hyde was outspoken in his denunciation of polygamy. He returned to San Francisco in late December 1856 and was soon thereafter formally excommunicated from the Church. Hyde then took to lecturing against Mormonism. This included a stopover in Marysville where he spoke about polygamy a month before the publication of the *Weekly Spiritualist* commenced.<sup>59</sup> Perhaps he was influenced by Spiritualists there or perhaps he inspired them. One observer wrote that Hyde caused quite a bit of excitement wherever he went.<sup>60</sup> Although he maintained a certain respect for Pratt's manner of public speaking, as compared to a number of other Mormon leaders,<sup>61</sup> Hyde made it his duty to counteract whatever influence Pratt had made in the San Francisco area with regard to the latter's promotion of polygamy and denunciation of Spiritualism.

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<sup>58</sup> Belinda Pratt, *Defence [sic] of polygamy, by a lady in Utah, in a letter to her sister in New Hampshire*. (1854). Also: Parley P. Pratt, *Marriage and Morals in Utah* (Liverpool: Orson Pratt, 1856).

<sup>59</sup> *Daily Democratic State Journal*, January, 12, 1857.

<sup>60</sup> Jorgenson, 129-130.

<sup>61</sup> Hyde, *Mormonism*, 40.

### Parley Pratt and Andrew Jackson Davis

Hyde condemned Pratt's *Key to Theology* by writing, "Andrew Jackson Davis has contributed no little to its matter and style."<sup>62</sup> Though Hyde harbored biased feelings against the Mormons this claim was not without warrant and should not be dismissed as a fabrication.<sup>63</sup> There were a number of rhetorical similarities between the writings of Davis and Pratt. Both spoke of material deity and spirit, spiritual communication, plurality of worlds, and both entertained concepts of eternal progression and Godhood for humanity. Davis and Pratt were inspired by their spiritual forebears. For Davis, Emanuel Swedenborg provided a foundation. For Pratt, the doctrinal innovations of Joseph Smith along with the Bible provided the basis of his speculations. It was this combination, the new with the old, which allowed Pratt to appropriate ideas and terms from Davis and place them within a Mormon context.

As a basis of their respective theologies, Davis and Pratt adhered to a material view of the divine, specifically that God was embodied. Davis wrote in a book published a year before Pratt began *Key to Theology*, "Deity is himself an organized substance—yea, organized upon anatomical, physiological, mechanical, chemical, electric, magnetic, and spiritual principles."<sup>64</sup> Pratt, by comparison, spoke of Jesus as "possessing the same attributes as his Father, in all their fulness [sic]; a God not only possessing a body and

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<sup>62</sup> Hyde, *Mormonism*, 135.

<sup>63</sup> Indeed, there were several problems with Hyde's polemical work *Mormonism, Its Leaders and Designs*, among them the fact that he took many of his ideas from other anti-Mormon sources and not entirely his own experience. Some of it was also in response to Cannon's writings about Hyde in the *Western Standard*. President Buchanan found the work to be helpful and a "*post hoc* justification for [his] decision to send federal troops to the [Utah] territory." Historian Hubert H. Bancroft thought that Hyde's work was the product of honest mind, despite the book's flaws. Whatever may be said of the book or Hyde, his observation regarding Pratt's similarity in thinking to Davis was original and should be taken as a well-informed diatribe. See: Ekins, 134-135, 138.

<sup>64</sup> Andrew Jackson Davis, *The Great Harmonia* (Boston: Benjamin B. Mussey & Co., 1850), 48.

parts, but flesh and bones, and sinews, and all the attributes, organs, senses, and affections of a perfect man.”<sup>65</sup>

One of the key differences between Davis and Pratt on the materiality of spirit lies in its origin. Both believed each human had an individual and immortal spirit or soul. For Davis the spirit was a higher degree in the development of a human being. Nature was made first for the body, and the body was made second for the spirit. One was not necessarily born with a spirit, one developed an individual spirit through spiritual enlightenment. In essence, one earned immortality by refining their intelligence until a spirit manifested. Pratt, as a Mormon, maintained that the individual spirit existed prior to birth as an unembodied spirit child of God the Father. At birth, the spirit took on a “fleshly tabernacle” in order to have the opportunity to gain wisdom. Pratt and Davis were essentially saying the same thing: that the purpose of a material body was to gain knowledge and experience.

Material embodiment was the biggest factor in the ability of spirits to learn about the universe. This learning was both experiential and learned. Learning required spiritual communication between humans and higher beings, with those further up the cosmic hierarchy providing an example of the kind of perfectibility, both physical and intellectual, that humans could attain. Of spiritual communication Davis wrote: “The era of spiritual communications has nearly come. Humanity is progressing rapidly toward perfection – the fruit-bearing period will soon arrive – and the high-born soul of man will then experience sensations and sentiments which shall cause him to *feel* himself but a

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<sup>65</sup> Pratt, *Key to Theology*, 31.

little lower than the angels.”<sup>66</sup> Opening his book, Pratt wrote: “Theology is the science of communication, or of correspondence, between God, angels, spirits, and men, by means of visions, dreams, interpretations, conversations, inspirations, or the spirit of prophecy and revelation.”<sup>67</sup>

Communication was a key factor in both Davis’s and Pratt’s thought. It was the ability to communicate with other-worldly spiritual beings that made religious experience unique. Davis, the self-proclaimed clairvoyant, differentiated between *voluntary* and *independent* clairvoyance. The former was the ability of spiritually enlightened individuals to enter in and out of that state at will. The latter was an artificially induced state brought on by the use of the then-popular notion of magnetism. Davis warned that those who entered a clairvoyant state without first attaining the proper level of spiritual development risked effectively losing their mind, or not returning from that state.<sup>68</sup> In short, true spiritual communication was the privilege of a select few.

Pratt, true to his Christian heritage, saw such spiritual gifts as easily obtained once one took on the name of Christ through baptism. He was himself prone to visions and dreams which he loved to interpret. In *Key to Theology* he dedicated an entire chapter to the topic of dreams. Running throughout the book was a rather virulent anti-mysticism. Spiritual communication was the not the exclusive right of disciplined or ecstatic individuals. It was open to all. It did not require special training. Indeed, the more people who joined the Church the more interstellar spiritual communication could take place.

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<sup>66</sup> Davis, *The Great Harmonia*, 212.

<sup>67</sup> Pratt, *Key to Theology*, 1.

<sup>68</sup> Davis, *The Great Harmonia*, 203.

One of the ironies of the Mormon-Spiritualist debate was the way the two movements disseminated ideas and practices. Davis espoused a fierce independence in thought but maintained that spiritual communication was for a select few. Spiritualism was supposed to provide a liberating experience from the confines of organized religion, although Davis maintained an exclusivist attitude towards the practice, confining it to a limited number of people. Pratt espoused obedience to doctrine and the commandments of God and the living prophets while maintaining that spiritual communication was the right of all members of the Church. Mormonism invited people into an inclusive community and claimed privileges for anyone who followed a loosely prescribed regime. Davis, for his part, would spend the remainder of his career after the 1850s backing away from his initial clairvoyant claims. Instead he attempted to work his ideas into a more philosophical system set down in books that others could draw from, thus making his ideas practical for a potentially larger and more inclusive audience.

Inclusivity played a role in bringing all the different levels of beings in the universe together. Because of the material state of these beings, having a physical place to reside was essential. Davis and Pratt both adhered to the (then conceptual) notion of a plurality of worlds outside the solar system. On the plurality of worlds and the populations thereof Davis claimed, “Man shall be created through the mediums and instrumentalities of countless Suns and Planets.”<sup>69</sup> Furthermore, “instead of living among the objects and personalities of the planet upon which the individual spirit was born, its situation is so altered as to fit it to live amidst more beauteous forms and in

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<sup>69</sup> Davis, *The Great Harmonia*, 16.

higher societies.”<sup>70</sup> Pratt wrote, “God, angels and men, are all of one species, one race, one great family widely diffused among the planetary systems, as colonies, kingdoms, nations, &c.”<sup>71</sup>

In an earlier work by Davis titled *The Principles of Nature*, which he claimed to have dictated to a scribe while in a clairvoyant state, he expounded at length on the inhabitants of all the other planets in the solar system (as well as claiming to have seen a ninth planet long before Pluto was discovered). Even the gaseous planets of Saturn and Jupiter, he claimed, were full of organic life, both vegetable and animal. On each planet, Davis explained, existed human beings in various states of material and spiritual perfection.<sup>72</sup> Those closest to the Sun were the most rudimentary in form, while those on Saturn were the most perfected.

Pratt believed that humans were unique to planet Earth. He never made any claims about other beings within the solar system. Instead, he talked about the need of “unnumbered millions of worlds, and of systems of worlds” in order to contain all the potential Gods who would reach perfection.<sup>73</sup> This was more along the line of thought Davis developed in *The Great Harmonia*. Pratt envisioned these worlds in much the same fashion as Davis did in *The Principles of Nature* as being “filled by man, and beast, and fowl, and tree, and all the vast varieties of beings.”<sup>74</sup> The one major difference is that Pratt believed along the lines of historical Christianity in that humanity was God’s special

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<sup>70</sup> Davis, *The Great Harmonia*, 157.

<sup>71</sup> Pratt, *Key to Theology*, 33.

<sup>72</sup> Andrew Jackson Davis, *The Principles of Nature* (New York: S.S. Lyon and Wm. Fishbough, 1847), 176-209.

<sup>73</sup> Pratt, *Key to Theology*, 47.

<sup>74</sup> *Ibid.*, 47.

creation whose genesis was unique to Earth. It was only after a sojourn on Earth that perfected and embodied spirits, as angels and Gods, moved on to other worlds. For Davis every atom in existence strove toward becoming human, a literally universal process that germinated from within each solar system making the existence of humans on Earth nothing unique. Both saw beings moving around the cosmos as they went up the ladder of perfection, a process called eternal progression.

Eternal progression and the potentiality of Godhood for humans was a concept employed by both Davis and Pratt. Davis wrote that "Man shall know himself to be immortal, he shall be the King, the Lord, the Crown, the Coronation of Nature; he shall aspire to be an Angel, a Seraph, a God."<sup>75</sup> Pratt wrote, "Godlike attributes, being engendered in man, the offspring of Deity, only need cultivating, improving, developing, and advancing by a means of a series of progressive changes, in order to arrive at the fountain '*Head*,' the standard, the climax of Divine Humanity."<sup>76</sup>

The phrase *eternal progression* is now in common usage within LDS discourse. In Mormon circles it is an umbrella term encompassing the concepts of exaltation, the three degrees of glory, and celestial marriage. According to the *Encyclopedia of Mormonism*, the concept behind this term was first developed by Brigham Young.<sup>77</sup> The earliest reference was to a line from a sermon given June 15, 1856: "As Saints in the last days we have much to learn; there is an eternity of knowledge before us; at most we

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<sup>75</sup> Davis, *The Great Harmonia*, 17.

<sup>76</sup> Pratt, *Key to Theology*, 32.

<sup>77</sup> Lisa Ramey Adams, "Eternal Progression," in *Encyclopedia of Mormonism*, ed. Ludlow, 465-466.

receive but very little in this stage of our progression.”<sup>78</sup> It is possible that Young picked up on the use of the word *progress* from reading *Key to Theology* as he only started using it after the publication of Pratt’s work.

A form of the word *progress* in relation to stages of knowledge, wisdom, and being was employed by both Pratt and Young in publications dating from 1855-56 but not the whole phrase *eternal progression*. This phrase *was*, however, employed by Davis as early as 1847, to describe his vision of the path towards spiritual perfection.<sup>79</sup> While the word *progress* does appear once in the Book of Mormon in relation to individuals’ spiritual development, it does not factor into any of the revelations contained in the Doctrine and Covenants.<sup>80</sup> It appears that the word only entered Mormon discourse once its leaders were exposed to Davis’s ideas of Spiritualism. Pratt used the phrase “degree(s) of progress(ion)” in *Key to Theology* to describe the various stages on the spiritual path.<sup>81</sup>

Prior to the advent of Mormonism the notion that humans could become divine was known as *theosis* and was associated primarily with Eastern Orthodoxy. In the rhetoric of Joseph Smith the idea became known as *exaltation*. Smith defined exaltation as entering into the celestial glory, the highest of the three degrees of glory. Only those who had entered into celestial marriage could attain exaltation.<sup>82</sup> The association of this concept with Godhood came from Smith’s famous King Follett Discourse where he said,

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<sup>78</sup> Brigham Young, “The Order of Progression in Knowledge—The Way by Which Saints Become One—Aptness of Men to Remember Evil Rather Than Good—A Characteristic of Saints is to Remember Good and Forget Evil—Our Affections Should be Placed on the Kingdom of God Above all Other Things,” in *Journal of Discourses: Volume 3* (Liverpool: Orson Pratt, 1856), 354.

<sup>79</sup> Davis, *Principles*, 68, 86, 620, 671; and Davis, *The Great Harmonia*, 39, 143, 189, 315.

<sup>80</sup> Mosiah 1:17.

<sup>81</sup> Pratt, *Key to Theology*, 36, 47, 64.

<sup>82</sup> D&C 131:1-4.

according to the accounts, “God himself was once as we are now, and is an exalted man.”<sup>83</sup> Pratt incorporated the concept into *Key to Theology*, fusing it with notions of development and progress.

For Davis the idea that humans could become a God likely came from Swedenborg. One scholar noted that for Swedenborg “God, in fact, was the Divine Human, and... heaven was a human place.”<sup>84</sup> There were three heavens and three hells a spirit could pass through on its way to the central sphere occupied by God. In Davis’s cosmology everything was moved up three degrees, so to speak, so that there were six “spiritual spheres” with no concept of hell. “Later, at some distant moment in the evolution of the cosmos when all spirits reached the Sixth Sphere and were as close as they could be to the center, Davis’s spheres – in a witness to infinite progress – were to be reconstituted.”<sup>85</sup>

It is debatable whether or not Smith borrowed his Three Degrees of Glory from the tripartite heavens of Swedenborg. After all, the Apostle Paul spoke of three heavens in his Second Letter to the Corinthians providing a scriptural proof-text when read literally.<sup>86</sup> Smith laid out his doctrine of three heavenly spheres in Doctrine and Covenants Section 76, a revelation dating from 1832. Historian D. Michael Quinn has shown that books by Swedenborg were available in Smith’s neighborhood prior to the founding of the Church. Smith acknowledged familiarity with Swedenborg but only in

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<sup>83</sup> Joseph Smith, “The King Follett Discourse,” <https://www.lds.org/ensign/1971/04/the-king-follett-sermon?lang=eng>. (accessed February 9, 2013).

<sup>84</sup> Catherine L. Albanese, “On the Matter of Spirit: Andrew Jackson Davis and the Marriage of God and Nature,” *Journal of the American Academy of Religion* 60, no. 1 (Spring 1992): 6.

<sup>85</sup> Albanese, 6-7.

<sup>86</sup> 2 Corinthians 12:2: “I knew a man in Christ above fourteen years ago, (whether in the body, I cannot tell; or whether out of the body, I cannot tell: God knoweth;) such an one caught up to the third heaven.”

1839.<sup>87</sup> There is also another verse that suggests further spheres within Smith's cosmology. Doctrine and Covenants 131:1, a revelation from 1843, reads: "In the celestial glory there are three heavens or degrees." This is not just three degrees of glory, telestial, terrestrial and celestial; this is an additional three degrees *in* the celestial glory alone, for which celestial marriage was required in order to obtain the highest. This parallels the six spiritual spheres of Davis and suggests that both took a cue from Swedenborg. In Smith's case, the amendment to the Three Degrees of Glory came after his admitted knowledge of Swedenborg, whether or not Smith's original revelation was influenced by him. Rather than simply copying Swedenborg, with his three heavens/three hells duality, Davis and Smith took a more Universalist stance by opening the heavens to all with six degrees to aspire to.

Pratt's cosmology would outdo both his mentor Smith and Davis in its breadth and detail. Celestial marriage, i.e. polygamy, was still necessary for the upper echelons of heaven but the degrees of glory were nearly endless. "Besides the peculiar glory of the celestial, there are in the resurrection and final reward of man, many subordinate spheres, many degrees of reward adapted to an almost infinite variety of circumstances... and meted out in the scale of exact justice and mercy, may be conceived or expressed under three grand heads, or principal spheres," the telestial, terrestrial, and celestial.<sup>88</sup> Pratt took Smith's revelations on the three degrees of glory, and the three subordinate degrees within the celestial sphere, as merely representative of the many places a human spirit might end up.

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<sup>87</sup> Quinn, 217-219.

<sup>88</sup> Pratt, *Key to Theology*, 137.

Filtered through Davis's ideas about boundless planetary systems each giving birth to human beings, Pratt conceived of an interconnected cosmos where there was infinite space for progress, and each spirit might attain its rightful place in the final stage of universal perfection. One key difference between Pratt's thought and Davis's was that, for Davis, humans emerged from the various solar systems; for Pratt they ended up there. Obtaining a degree of glory only came with death and the final resurrection, not with a particular birth origin. Thus Pratt was able to envision a materialistic and truly cosmic order squarely within a geocentric biblical framework. This was also a clear break from a theological stance he had taken earlier. In 1842 he had written: "But remember, that in the worlds on high thy stay is short. Jesus and the saints are only there to await the full time for earth to be cleansed and prepared for their reception, and they will all come home again to their native planet."<sup>89</sup> Smith's original revelation on the degrees of glory<sup>90</sup> was given in 1832 while his revelation of the additional three degrees within the celestial sphere was not given until 1843.<sup>91</sup> Pratt must have interpreted the earlier revelation initially as regarding temporary states of being, while the later revelation, with its extra degrees and emphasis on celestial marriage, evoked a more permanent extra-terrestrial status.

Further evidence of Pratt's direct intellectual engagement with Davis can be found by simply looking at the titles of their respective works. *The Principles of Nature, Her Divine Revelations, and a Voice to Mankind* and credited as *By and Through Andrew*

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<sup>89</sup> Parley P. Pratt, *The World Turned Upside Down, or Heaven on Earth* (Liverpool: Millennial Star Office, 1842), 24-25.

<sup>90</sup> Doctrine and Covenants 76

<sup>91</sup> Doctrine and Covenants 131

*Jackson Davis, in Three Parts* was his work from 1847. His 1850 opus was titled *The Great Harmonia; Being a Philosophical Revelation of the Natural, Spiritual, and Celestial Universe*. Pratt's long title for his work was *Key to the Science of Theology: Designed as An Introduction to the First Principles of Spiritual Philosophy; Religion; Law and Government; As Delivered by the Ancients, and as Restored in this Age, for the Final Development of Universal Peace, Truth and Knowledge*.

Certain key words are shared by both: philosophical/philosophy, spiritual, principles, and universe/universal. *Voice to Mankind* is also reminiscent of Pratt's own earlier work *A Voice of Warning, and Instruction to All People*, perhaps something that drew him to Davis's work. Other elements of Pratt's title share an affinity with Davis. Pratt's use of the word *key* can be compared to its use by Davis early on in *Principles of Nature*. Part One of that work is titled "The Key."<sup>92</sup> As for the word *science*, Davis's *The Great Harmonia* both attacks contemporary physical science while attempting to build a new science based on his revelations. For example, he wrote: "how unprofitable and unsatisfactory are those sciences of anatomy and physiology, now in the world, which have for their foundation the mere form and function which Man's organization presents to the senses!"<sup>93</sup> Davis, like Pratt after him, sought to combine a greater number of concepts, ideas, and perceived physical realities under the rubric of science.

There were also significant differences between the titles. Most importantly Pratt was not claiming his work as any new revelation, as did Davis "By and Through" himself. Pratt's claim was that his theology derived from ancient sources and had been

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<sup>92</sup> Davis, *Principles of Nature*, 5.

<sup>93</sup> Davis, *The Great Harmonia*, 14.

“restored” in the contemporary dispensation by Smith. In taking much of the more cosmic and universal elements of Davis’s thought and placing them within a biblical framework Pratt countered the notion that the Poughkeepsie Seer’s ideas were original. It was a polemical device but one that would have spoken to any Mormon who might have flirted with spirit-rapping, table-tipping, séances, clairvoyance, or free-thinking in the 1850s. The Bible they all at one time or another placed their faith in was still the sole foundation for existence and salvation no matter how far out in the universe one’s spirit traveled.

This biblical foundation was also a major difference between Pratt and Davis. As abstract as either thinker could get, Pratt’s ultimate agenda could be summed up in one word: order. Not just any order, but the order prescribed by the restored Mormon gospel. Pratt made proper nouns out of Theology and Theocracy and never separated the two. “Spiritual Philosophy,” religion, law, and governance were but aspects of the same complete system. Both Pratt and Davis subscribed to the notion that their age was an age when humanity was reaching a spiritual and material apex. Nevertheless, how that apex would be reached was strikingly different. For Pratt, humanity as a whole needed to first accept the Mormon brand of Theology and once this was properly achieved, the corresponding Theocracy became inevitable. For Davis, the complete eradication of systems, dogmas, creeds, and (Christian) theology was necessary before humanity could reach its next state of spiritual and social evolution. Pratt’s worldview required the millennial return of Jesus Christ; Davis’s worldview required the individual development of spirit out of bodily and intellectual refinement. For Pratt, humanity could be helped

from above; for Davis humanity could only help itself. That both could use similar rhetoric to reach such different conclusions was fitting for a time when science, technology, and society were all on the verge of radical breakthroughs and chaotic disruptions.

In retrospect, Spiritualism is perhaps something of an anomaly in the history of American religion in spite of its American origins. Spiritualism is more likely to bring to mind images of Victorian England and the author Arthur Conan Doyle (whose first Sherlock Holmes novel dealt in part with Mormonism, incidentally). Had Pratt still been in England when Spiritualism reached its shores, he may very well have reached similar conclusions about it. *Key to Theology* was written largely in California but published in England. Pratt's book would have spoken to Mormons in England who had been exposed to Spiritualism. Although Spiritualism in California was Pratt's most immediate worry in terms of competing religions, it certainly is not something most people readily associate with antebellum California. This helps explain why such a seemingly insignificant polemical battle the Mormons, and Pratt specifically, waged against Spiritualism in the 1850s has not received much scholarly attention. Yet, when viewed in the light of the transition Mormonism had to make from being just one of many New England sects to arise during the Second Great Awakening to being a dominating religion on the Western frontier in the 1850s, even the minor threat of a competing alternative religion suddenly takes on significance. That one largely forgotten (or deliberately downplayed) episode in Mormon history played such an important role in the

development of its cosmology is a testament to early Mormonism's ability to absorb and refurbish ideas to meet the changing needs of its membership.

Ultimately, the threat that Pratt saw in Spiritualism never amounted to more than a few high-profile but nonetheless isolated cases including John Hyde and Amasa Lyman. Although these examples became issues after Pratt had left California (or died), they are connected by time spent in that state. California was where Spiritualism made its impact on the Western frontier and where the three apostates and Pratt were exposed to it. During the 1850s Spiritualism was a lingering presence in California and something Mormon missionaries had to be aware of. The more they could educate themselves about it the better they could counter it.

On the other hand, exposure to Spiritualist ideas posed the danger of apostasy among even those who were ordained to lead Mormon settlers. Acceptance of Spiritualist ideas often took two forms: complete disfellowship from Mormonism, as in the cases of Hyde and Lyman, or the appropriation of Spiritualist ideas into a Mormon doctrinal framework. The latter drove Parley Pratt through many parts of *Key to Theology*. The influence of that work over the half century following its initial publication in 1855 guaranteed that certain elements of Spiritualism filtered down into common Mormon belief. Pratt's Spiritualist-infused cosmology gave a backbone to Mormon belief through the wilderness of Brigham Young's theological speculation throughout the third-quarter of the nineteenth century. It was that backbone that LDS leaders returned to when they sought to bring Mormonism back in line with the teachings

of the early Church during the modernizing phase of the religion in the early twentieth century.

## EPILOGUE

Between Pratt's death in 1857 and 1915 *Key to Theology* went through several editions both in the United States and in England. Editions through the 1890s appear to have kept intact Pratt's original text even though they were in some cases re-typeset. In 1915, however, significant redactions and changes were made to the text, most for the purpose of modernizing the rhetoric and excising outdated ideas. All explicit references to Spiritualist figures were cut but criticism of "mesmerism" and "animal magnetism" remained.<sup>1</sup> Spiritualism was still an active religious phenomenon in the early twentieth century even if names like Andrew Jackson Davis and Emanuel Swedenborg were not on the tips of most practitioners' tongues. This helps explain why other references to "second sight" and "clairvoyance" also remained, their use being Pratt's appropriation of the Spiritualist terms into a Mormon theological context.<sup>2</sup> Spiritualism was still a threat but one that had become subdued over time, giving way to more immediate concerns such as evolution.

1915 also saw the publication of new work of systematic theology, the first major undertaking of its kind since Pratt's treatise, by a young up-and-coming leader in the Church, John Widtsoe.<sup>3</sup> His *Rational Theology* offered a much more contemporary

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<sup>1</sup> Parley P. Pratt, *Key to the Science of Theology* (Salt Lake City: Deseret News, 1915), 112.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, 120.

<sup>3</sup> John Widtsoe was a professor of agriculture and biology at several universities in Utah from the 1890s to the 1950s. Though he was not a member of the Quorum of the Twelve when he published *Rational Theology* in 1915 he would soon be called to it in 1921. In 1898 he was ordained as a member of the Seventy, a lesser body within the Church's governing structure. In 1904 he had published a book called *Joseph Smith as Scientist*. His youthful zeal for reconciling religion with science is evident throughout his early works, though later on he would shy away from making as many explicit correlations as are to be

understanding of Mormon doctrine but also showed engagement with Pratt's *Key to Theology*. In some places Widtsoe reformulated Pratt's ideas in more modern language. In other places he deviated from them. The publication in the same year of a revised *Key to Theology* and *Rational Theology* illustrate the tension between old and new thinkers within the Church at a time when it was undergoing rapid change. It also shows how Pratt's ideas continued to influence the Church.

Some of the changes made to the 1915 text of *Key to Theology* simply softened the dogmatism of Pratt's thinking on particular doctrines. For example, priesthood holders needing to be of Israelite royal ancestry was reduced to "should" be of royal ancestry.<sup>4</sup> In some cases Widtsoe softened Pratt's positions in *Rational Theology*. Pratt's cosmic race became for Widtsoe a brotherhood of man sharing a common destiny. Pratt's millennial society under the reign of Christ became for Widtsoe the utopian United Order of the present. Widtsoe even referenced polygamy, albeit in coded language, as part of a complete Restoration in spite of all reference to it being cut from *Key to Theology* and the Church's official discontinuation of it twenty-five years prior. One major difference between the two texts is that Widtsoe's makes no reference to Jerusalem or Israel (and only one minor reference to Zion). At a time when the Church was simply trying to maintain its existence and hold its influence in Utah, grand designs of theocracy had virtually vanished. Zionism, the movement to restore political Israel, was also fully underway with Jews having a near monopoly on its activities. The idea of

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found in his early work. Nevertheless, he is known as one of the "apostle-scientists" that butted heads with the more traditional and orthodox element within the Twelve over issues such as evolution.

<sup>4</sup> Pratt, *Key to Theology* (1915), 68.

Mormons having any major role in Israel's restoration at that point was unthinkable, at least for a young leader like Widtsoe.

The 1915 edition of *Key to Theology* maintained, however, Pratt's vision of twin centers of Zion. For elder leaders in the Church this was still part of the Mormon message. Even if Mormons were not in Palestine participating alongside Jews, the ultimate melding of an American New Jerusalem and the historical Jerusalem was the goal. Pratt's treatise served as a testament to this continued belief in a worldwide Theocracy (the use of that word still in the 1915 text). Widtsoe's book, in contrast, discussed only what the Mormons could do immediately in real terms, which was to build up a sustainable society in the American West.<sup>5</sup> Read together, the 1915 edition of *Key to Theology* and *Rational Theology* make an interesting pair. The former harkened back to a more revolutionary time in the Church's history while the latter reworked recently hidden themes in terms palatable to a mainstream audience or, more appropriately, to a young Mormon audience conscious that outsiders may read it. The most pressing concerns which the changes to *Key to Theology* and the concurrent publication of *Rational Theology* presented were those of evolution and polygamy.

The revised seventh edition of *Key to Theology* was published on the heels of the so-called "Evolution Controversy," which arose at Brigham Young University in 1911. 1909 had marked the fiftieth anniversary of Charles Darwin's *The Origin of Species* and the first time the LDS Church leaders addressed the scientific theory of evolution in

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<sup>5</sup> It may very well be that Widtsoe's exclusion of Jerusalem and Israel was his way of distancing the Church from Zionism in order to save the Church from more controversy, as it had had its share by 1915. Later writers, such as the conservative Bruce R. McConkie would see Zionism as the work of God. See: Bruce R. McConkie, "Zionism," in *Mormon Doctrine* (Salt Lake City: Bookcraft, 1966), 855-856.

relation to their theology.<sup>6</sup> Mainstream Christians, particularly Protestants, had long before reconciled their beliefs to the theories of Darwin. Perhaps because of the tense political and social issues plaguing the latter decades of the nineteenth century, the Mormon Church had not had the luxury of intellectual debate on evolution. By the end of the first decade of the twentieth century the modernizing influences of Utah's statehood and the emerging authority of several professional scientists within the ranks of the Church hierarchy caused some of the more conservative leaders to attempt to check the rapid changes.

Pratt's work is important in this context because his cosmology regarding a universal race of like-beings was (and is) completely incompatible with Darwin's theory of organic evolution by natural selection. For Pratt's cosmology to be reconciled with the scientific theory a qualifying statement such as a "special creation" for *Homo sapiens* outside of normal evolutionary trends would be necessary. Evolution proponents within the Church, such as James E. Talmage, would ultimately be forced to make this concession in the 1920s.<sup>7</sup> In the years following the 1911 controversy, the topic of evolution was disregarded in favor of theology at BYU, undermining any attempts at introducing the theory into Mormon thinking through official channels.<sup>8</sup>

Evolution was quietly tolerated at LDS sponsored colleges as early as the mid-1870s. Talmage was a product of Brigham Young Academy and by 1882, at the age of

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<sup>6</sup> Gary James Bergera, "The 1911 Evolution Controversy at Brigham Young University," in *The Search for Harmony: Essays on Science and Mormonism*, eds. Gene A. Sessions and Craig J. Oberg (Salt Lake City: Signature Books, 1993), 23-43.

<sup>7</sup> Richard Sherlock, "A Turbulent Spectrum: Mormon Reactions to the Darwinist Legacy," in *The Search for Harmony*, eds. Sessions and Oberg, 74.

<sup>8</sup> Bergera, 35-37.

twenty, he was teaching there and publicly professing evolution. Talmage's mentor at the academy, Karl G. Maeser, would go on to denounce the theory in 1893.<sup>9</sup> Just prior to the controversy of 1911 BYU English professor Nels Nelson published a book with financial backing from the Church in which he presented his own take on evolution.<sup>10</sup> Taking a cue from H.G. Wells's *War of the Worlds* he denounced what he called a "lucky differentiation, whereby evolution in [humanity] took the form of brain-modification; that the same accident might have happened to the lion, the eagle" on earth or intelligent octopi on Mars.<sup>11</sup> Instead, Nelson "developed a vast system of biological, spiritual, and intellectual evolution, including an unfortunate theory of racial evolution."<sup>12</sup>

Evolution was a threat to Mormon orthodoxy and undermined the ability of leaders to maintain a hold on it. Some such as the apostle Joseph Fielding Smith would completely denounce evolution in favor of strict biblical literalism. Influenced by Protestant Fundamentalism, Smith led the conservative faction against the "apostle-scientists" who made up the other portion of the Church's main governing body.<sup>13</sup> 1915 marks an interesting juncture in this debate. Widtsoe's allegorical take on scripture in *Rational Theology* allowed him to skirt the issue of evolution without denouncing it. For example, on the genesis of humanity he stated, "the exact process whereby man was placed upon earth is not known with certainty, nor is it vital to a clear understanding of

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<sup>9</sup> Dennis Rowley, "Inner Dialogue: James Talmage's Choice of Science as a Career, 1876-84," in *The Search for Harmony*, eds. Sessions and Craig J. Oberg, 53-54.

<sup>10</sup> Sherlock, 80.

<sup>11</sup> Nels Nelson, *Scientific Aspects of Mormonism; or Religion in Terms of Life* (New York: G.P. Putman's Sons, 1904), 67.

<sup>12</sup> Sherlock, 80.

<sup>13</sup> Steven H. Heath, "Agreeing to Disagree: Henry Eyring and Joseph Fielding Smith," in *The Search for Harmony*, eds. Sessions and Oberg, 137-155.

the plan of salvation.”<sup>14</sup> Widtsoe was a known proponent of evolution and while this remark does not explicitly support evolution, it is a clear denunciation of a literal reading of Genesis 2:7.<sup>15</sup> The same ambiguity allowed Widtsoe to state that all humanity came from “the one *earthly* ancestor, Adam”<sup>16</sup> (emphasis added). Unlike Pratt’s vision of a cosmic race where all beings look alike, Widtsoe was finding ways to leave the idea of evolution open, if not to implicitly suggest that humanity’s physical origin is unique to this planet. Widtsoe called humanity a “race of brothers, of the same origin, with the same purposes and with the same destiny.”<sup>17</sup> There is no mention of being of one race with extra-terrestrial or extra-celestial beings beyond human spirits having existed prior to mortality, and of the latter he makes no claim as to their literal appearance and form.<sup>18</sup>

This bit of exegesis is meant to illustrate the way in which Mormon intellectuals were getting around the issue of evolution or finding subtle ways to introduce it into theological dialogue. That Widtsoe’s work in regards to human origins and destiny represented the viewpoint of younger and more scientifically minded leadership in the Church, helps explain why conservative Mormon leaders chose to resurrect *Key to Theology* that same year. Throwing Pratt’s evolution-incompatible cosmology back into the mix in response to Widtsoe would have served as a reaffirmation of orthodoxy on the authority of one of the most read and respected leaders of the early Church. The redactions and revisions made by Charles Penrose, First Counselor of the First

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<sup>14</sup> John Widtsoe, *Rational Theology* (Salt Lake City: General Priesthood Committee, 1915), 47.

<sup>15</sup> Genesis 2:7: “And the LORD God formed man of the dust of the ground, and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life; and man became a living soul.”

<sup>16</sup> Widtsoe, 125.

<sup>17</sup> *Ibid.*, 127.

<sup>18</sup> The concept of pre-mortal spirits is one of the fundamental doctrines of Mormonism.

Presidency of the Church at the time, amounted to an official endorsement of Pratt's ideas. Its publication by the Church-owned *Deseret News* supports that conclusion. *Key to Theology* served as a weapon for conservative leaders in an internal battle for control, authority, and orthodoxy in face of the threat of secularization and assimilation into mainstream society. It was a denunciation of evolution in the same implicit manner with which Widtsoe denounced a literal reading of Genesis.

Many of the changes Penrose made to *Key to Theology* illustrate concessions the Church had already made during its struggle for existence during the last quarter of the nineteenth century. Ultimately, the Church would back off from making any official statements on matters of evolution, and science generally.<sup>19</sup> In 1915, however, Pratt's theology would have been a pointed if non-threatening way to make a case against evolution. Science was not the only issue that challenged church leadership in the decades which dove-tailed the turn of the century. Matters of doctrine, especially polygamy, underwent drastic changes. *Key to Theology*, similar to its role regarding the issue of evolution, became both a tool of conservative thinkers as well as a casualty of modernization.

In the 1915 edition of *Key to Theology* Penrose removed all references to polygamy. In Mormon parlance this was called eternal, celestial, or plural marriage. Sometimes it was also referred to in code as the "Patriarchal Order." Pratt was an avowed polygamist, having taken a dozen wives during his life. In the original text he expounded upon the virtues of what he saw as a divine institution based on scripture.

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<sup>19</sup> Foundation for Apologetic Information and Research, "Mormonism and science/Evolution/Official stance," [http://en.fairmormon.org/Mormonism\\_and\\_science/Evolution/Official\\_stance](http://en.fairmormon.org/Mormonism_and_science/Evolution/Official_stance) (accessed April 14, 2013).

While it is hard to gauge just how much influence his endorsement may have had on Mormons in general, the officially sanctioned status of his book made it one of the few widely read tracts in favor of the practice.<sup>20</sup>

After years of outside pressure, arrests, and a president of the Church going underground because of polygamy, Church President Wilfred Woodruff issued a Manifesto in 1890 denouncing the practice. The Manifesto has been published in the Doctrine and Covenants since 1908. For many today the Manifesto is seen as having been divine revelation but it is important to note that it is not published as a revelation but as Official Declaration 1. In the 1908 edition it was attached to the book at the very end, after the index and topical guide, and not as part of the main body of revelations.<sup>21</sup> The present and future political ramifications of this practical, but not technically divine, renunciation of doctrine (that is to say the declaration is that of man, not of God) is beyond the scope of this paper. However, what it meant in the early twentieth century is important. It is common knowledge now that polygamous marriages continued in secret (though at a reduced rate) into the early part of the twentieth century.<sup>22</sup> The Manifesto of 1890 can be seen in this light as having been, at least initially, a political façade to appease a weary public in hopes of gaining statehood for Utah, which it achieved in 1896.

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<sup>20</sup> A price-list attached to the 1885 printing of a tract by Lorenzo Snow listed *Key to Theology* (and *A Voice of Warning*) only after Mormon scripture and a slightly more contemporary book on doctrine. See: Lorenzo Snow, *The Only Way to be Saved* (Salt Lake City: Deseret News Company, 1885), 16.

<sup>21</sup> Joseph Smith, et al. *The Doctrine and Covenants* (Salt Lake City: The Deseret News, 1908), 543-544.

<sup>22</sup> Ironically, this included Wilfred Woodruff's son Abraham O. Woodruff, who took a second wife in 1901. See: Brigham Young University, "Register of the Abraham O. Woodruff (1872-1904) Collection, 1894-1904," <http://files.lib.byu.edu/ead/XML/VMSS777.xml#bio> (accessed March 24, 2013).

Post-Manifesto editions of *Key to Theology* present evidence that in the early 1890s Church authorities may not have really intended to drop the practice for good. One might expect that care would have been taken to remove references to the practice in any editions printed after 1890. However, two so-called “Fifth” editions were printed in Utah in 1891 and 1893, respectively, which left intact the entirety of Pratt’s explanation and support of plural marriage. The first was issued by the printing press of then-First Counselor to the First Presidency, George Q. Cannon.<sup>23</sup> The second was put out by *Deseret News*.<sup>24</sup> Cannon, the second highest ranking authority in the Church, and *Deseret News*, an organ of the Church, effectively counted as official endorsement of Pratt’s words. It was not until 1915 that the *Deseret News* edition was revised and redacted.

Interestingly, the writings of Pratt’s redactor, Charles W. Penrose, provide clues to the evolution of official pronouncements on the issue of polygamy. In his 1882 work on Mormon doctrine for children he wrote:

If a man receives from the Lord more wives than one under the sealing ordinances of celestial marriage, where is the moral wrong? They belong to no other man, but are his by mutual consent of all the interested parties, and they live together in the marriage state, one as much as the other. In this position there are occasions for the exercise of patience, forbearance, charity, self-sacrifice and the exercise of all the virtues to a far greater degree than in any other.<sup>25</sup>

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<sup>23</sup> Parley P. Pratt, *Key to the Science of Theology* (Salt Lake City: George Q. Cannon & Sons Co., 1891).

<sup>24</sup> Parley P. Pratt, *Key to the Science of Theology* (Salt Lake City: Deseret News Publishing Co., 1893).

<sup>25</sup> Charles W. Penrose, *Mormon Doctrine, Plain and Simple, or Leaves from the Tree of Life* (Salt Lake City: Juvenile Instructor Office, 1882), 51.

In the second edition from 1897 he inserted “as experience demonstrated before human law forbade it” between “position” and “there” in the last sentence of the above quote.<sup>26</sup> This qualifying statement recognized that polygamy had been outlawed but the tone suggested regret of those circumstances. Instead of editing these references to polygamy out they were still present as an example of what the ideal doctrine should have been, regardless of the Manifesto of 1890 and any man-made law forbidding the practice. This edition of the book was published by George Q. Cannon, giving official endorsement to its contents, as Penrose had yet to become a member of any Church governing body.

By 1915 Penrose was a member of First Presidency. His doctoring of Pratt’s text gave the official stamp of approval to its contents upon reprinting. At this point the leadership realized that explicit references to polygamy, even as a former practice, would have been politically unwise. Pratt’s cosmology may have helped in the battle against evolutionary theory but his endorsement of polygamy would have been deadly (though it is possible that astute readers could have been inspired by the modernized edition to seek out the older, non-doctored text). Ironically, despite John Widtsoe’s differences with conservative leaders over evolution, his *Rational Theology* offered an implicit endorsement of polygamy that other leaders were unwilling to make through reprinting Pratt’s work.

Speaking theologically, Widtsoe stated that at the time of Adam the “Patriarchal Order” was in place with all its “essential parts.” After a long history of apostasy Christ restored the Church to “order and completeness.” Again, after another long period of

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<sup>26</sup> Charles W. Penrose, *Mormon Doctrine, Plain and Simple, or Leaves from the Tree of Life* (Salt Lake City: George Q. Cannon & Sons Co., 1897), 67.

apostasy the Church was restored by Joseph Smith “precisely as was the primitive Church, and more fully than at any other time in the history of the world.”<sup>27</sup> No mention was made of the fact that polygamy had been declared heretical, effectively reducing the Church to an incomplete status. This was possibly because the Church had not completely stopped practicing polygamy and thus would not have been considered incomplete.

Today *Key to Theology* reads like a mixed bag of modern and outdated rhetoric, with the former holding out because it just happened to be proven true (the concept of plurality of worlds, for example; in the 1990s scientists confirmed the existence of planets elsewhere in the galaxy, outside the solar system, giving what was once a speculative idea a basis in fact). Ideologically, Pratt’s philo-Semitic message has evidently been turned on its head as is illustrated by some members of the Church’s controversial proxy baptisms for Holocaust victims during the last decade. In an increasingly scientific world where evolution has all but been accepted as fact among a large percentage of people it is hard to imagine Pratt’s cosmology would have wide appeal, at least not without some serious theological consideration and tweaking. Finally his views on family, particularly the status of women, would have a hard time making an impact on modern people, including many modern Mormons. *Key to Theology* was a work that addressed the concerns of those in the mid-nineteenth century, a timely piece of writing as any good theology is.

By examining the influences which went into the construction of Pratt’s theology one can get a sense of what currents of thought were affecting Mormonism in the mid-

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<sup>27</sup> Widtsoe, 51-55.

nineteenth century: scientific discoveries and technological innovations; competition from alternative religions; freedom to experiment on the frontier with non-traditional social forms; and a desire to live in communion with all peoples under a banner of unity under the domain of God. These themes played out in Pratt's thinking, expressed theologically, in a form both complete and coherent. In turn, with a little editing, Pratt's ideas still held a strong position in 1915 among conservative members of the LDS Church who clung to the radical vision of Joseph Smith. The early decades of the twentieth century show that for Mormons modernization and so-called progress actually limited the radical possibilities of the original faith. Reprinting *Key to Theology* was a small attempt at keeping that faith alive.

As the twentieth century moved closer to its middle decades, the influence of scientific-minded leaders such as Widtsoe and Talmage waned and the Church came under the leadership of increasingly conservative leaders such as Joseph Fielding Smith. These leaders often had more affinity with the growing Fundamentalist movement among Protestants, leading the Church into a dogmatic corner that was neither kind to science nor theological speculation. By the 1950s the Church would take on the mantle of consensus-era domesticity, becoming the poster-child of the monogamous nuclear family. This combination was contrary to almost every aspect of Pratt's ideology in regards to science, cosmology, and family. As such, Pratt's influence, along with his person, was marginalized from theological discourse and historical study. At first edited and then ignored, Pratt and his theological books would not attract much notice until now, the beginning of the second decade of the twenty-first century. At a time when religious

tensions run high and the call for ecumenism, interfaith dialogue and tolerance pervades public discourse, Pratt serves as a model of informed evangelizing. Pratt employed persuasive rather than condemning rhetoric (even if by nineteenth-century standards), profound knowledge and understanding of other faiths (not to mention his own), and an eager and enthusiastic embrace of contemporary technology and scientific understanding in a way rarely seen today. If the exact content of Pratt's ideology is in many ways dated, the manner with which he disseminated it is most worthy of study in these times of religious pluralism.

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