

## I. MORMONS, MORMONISM, AND LATTER DAY SAINTS

Much of the current writing concerning German history tends to concentrate on political history. Religious history is often seen as an extension of the larger political sphere and not an area that should be examined in its own right. While there have been several examinations of the role of religion in Germany during the nineteenth and twentieth centuries these studies have tended to concentrate on the dominant Christian confessions. Admittedly there is a gap in the history of the minor confessions within German historical writing. In his study of German sectarian movements Christoph Ribbatt critiques German religious historians for not paying enough attention to the various sects and separatist movements, and for being too concentrated on the larger confessions.<sup>1</sup>

In spite of the perception given by the literature, minority religions do have a long history in Germany.<sup>2</sup> Throughout the centuries many indigenous religious groups had emerged, often lighting the religious landscape for a brief period. More often than not the indigenous sects vanished from the German landscape remembered only in the writings of the *ketzerhistoriker*. Yet the impact of German religious sects should not be underestimated.

While they may have vanished from the German landscape they did not vanish from history. Many of these groups simply migrated to locales more favourable to their religious leanings. These native German sectarian movements often had greater success after leaving German territory than they had within Germany, some surviving into the 21<sup>st</sup> century. What has come to be called the “American religion” appears to have deep roots in German sectarianism. The two dominating themes of American religious history, evangelicalism and millenarianism can be traced to the German pietistic movements.

In a certain way, the arrival of the Anglo-American sects in Germany during the nineteenth century was a return of German sectarianism to its geographical roots. While international exchanges of religious ideas had occurred prior to the early nineteenth century, generally, the expansion of Anglo-American sects into Germany coincided with the expansion of these sects within their own native

1 Christoph Ribbatt, *Religiöse Erregung: Protestantische Schwärmer im Kaiserreich*, Campus Verlag, Frankfurt, 1996, p. 22.

2 As a nation state Germany did not exist prior to 1871. In order to avoid redundancy, constant clarification, and confusion throughout this writing reference to Germany includes the geographical boundaries that comprised the nation state of Germany in 1871 unless otherwise indicated.

countries.<sup>3</sup> If persons and dates are to be cited for the arrival of Anglo-American sects in Germany, Johann Gerhardt Oncken's return to Germany in 1823 as an emissary for the *Continental Society for the Diffusion of Religious Knowledge over the Continent of Europe* stands as the possible starting point.<sup>4</sup> By the 1870s the Anglo-American sects had become a familiar part of the German landscape and had gained general acceptance in many of the German states.<sup>5</sup>

The membership numbers for these groups is by no means small. Between the years 1890–1910 the Baptists grew from 29,000 to 54,000.<sup>6</sup> It is estimated that over 100,000 persons joined churches outside of the mainline confessions during the same time period.<sup>7</sup> The majority of these new members had converted through a series of revivals.<sup>8</sup> Foreigners had originally led many of the Anglo-American sects situated in Germany. Soon native German revivalists and itinerant preachers would appear in German towns and cities.<sup>9</sup> While the other Anglo-American sects made significant gains during this time, the Mormons in particular failed to make any significant gains during these periods of awakening. Their message simply failed to resonate with the German population.

Often success of religious movements is measured in terms of conversions made, or membership numbers gained. In measuring the Mormons' success in Germany during the nineteenth and twentieth centuries one is compelled to deduce that the Mormons were less than successful. But success is relative. The failure of the Mormons to garner significant adherents during a period when their Anglo-American cousins seemed to be gaining both converts and social acceptability seems odd. As well, the Mormons' expansion into Germany failed to produce a convert ratio proportional to its host population, as had been the case in the

3 Early movements that could be considered as having transnational influence are the *Inspirationsgemeinden*, *Die Evangelische Brüder-Unität*, commonly known as *Herrnhuter*, the *Philadelphische Gemeinde*, and the Halle Pietists. On the transnational religious dynamic see Peter Vogt, "Different Ideas About the Church: The Theological Dimension in the Transfer and Adaptation of German Religious Groups to the Pennsylvania Environment, 1683–1740," pp. 17–43, Hans-Jürgen Grabbe (ed.), *Halle Pietism, Colonial North America, and the Young United States*, Franz Steiner Verlag, Stuttgart, 2008.

4 See Wayne Alan Detzler, "Johann Gerhard Oncken's Long Road to Toleration," *Journal of the Evangelical Theological Society*, vol. 36, no. 2, 1993, pp. 229–240. For an early history of the establishment of the Baptists in Germany see Joseph Lehmann, *Geschichte der deutschen Baptisten*, Bd. 1, *Bildung, Ausbreitung und Verfolgung der Gemeinden bis zum Anbruch wirklicher Religionsfreiheit im Jahre 1848*, J. G. Oncken Nachfolger, Hamburg, 1896.

5 Ribbat, *Religiöse Erregung*, p. 11.

6 Ribbat, *Religiöse Erregung*, p. 28.

7 Ribbat, *Religiöse Erregung*, p. 11.

8 Two early revivals were the 1905 *Mulheimer Erweckung* and the 1907 Pentecostal revival in Kassel. See Ribbat, *Religiöse Erregung*, p. 12.

9 Elias Schrenk was an early female Evangelist. See Ribbat, *Religiöse Erregung*, p. 12.

other Mormon mission fields.<sup>10</sup> Many explanations can be offered. Of course the standard organizational response is that the group faced state sanctions. Persecution, it is often claimed, is the central reason for the lack of the Mormons' missionary success in Germany.

Yet, is this really the case? In the following chapters we will examine the interaction between the Mormons and the German people. As Mormonism's first encounter with Germany, its religious values, customs, language, and people occurred in North America, and then expanded into Europe we should examine this encounter from both sides of the Atlantic.

### A. DEFINING MORMONISM

Mormonism! For most of the past 150 plus years, Mormonism has often been used interchangeably with Latter Day Saints to designate the organization founded by Joseph Smith Jr. The common understanding of Mormonism sees an unbroken continuum between the original "Church of Christ," founded by Smith, and the Mormons that migrated west from their base in Illinois and settled into what was to become the State of Utah. For many then, scholars included, Mormonism and the organization that is headquartered in Salt Lake City, Utah are one and the same. As the history of Mormonism is often written from the perspective of the Utah based LDS church, many, it appears, seem unaware that the organization in Utah, officially known as the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, is just one of many ecclesiastical bodies, that lays claim to being "the Mormons," or better put, "the Latter Day Saints." While the Utah based LDS church may be the largest and most recognized, this organization has no special right to use the term Mormon or Latter Day Saint and is not the sole representative of the movement to the exclusion of all others. When we speak of Mormons or Latter Day Saints then it should be with reference to all of the churches that base their teachings on the life experiences and messages of the founding prophet Joseph Smith Jr.<sup>11</sup>

Much of the current material dealing with the Mormons or Mormonism, whether literary, documentary, or popular media, fails to recognize the distinctions between the groups, and continues to equate the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints as Mormonism, and its members as the Mormons. For most of

10 For the purposes of this writing a "Mormon Mission" is defined as a specifically named geographic area where proselyting by missionaries takes place. The geographic regions of the world are divided according to these mission areas. The word "mission" is used with reference to one of these defined geographic regions.

11 Much of modern research into the divergency of the Latter Day Saint Movement owes a large debt of gratitude to Steven L. Shields who rescued many of the Latter Day Saint groups from obscurity.

the movement's history these "other" Mormon churches have come to define themselves in opposition to the LDS church. For most of the churches within the movement their individual self-definition was, and is, based on claims that they are different, and that they do not believe what the LDS church believes, that they are the true Mormons while all others are apostate churches."<sup>12</sup> Examining the claims of the various Mormon churches and pinpointing the legitimate successor to the church founded by Joseph Smith lies beyond the scope of this inquiry. Yet it is important to remark that there exists more than one Mormon church.

If we were to look at current literature on Mormonism there exists an apparent difficulty defining, and subsequently placing what has popularly come to be called Mormonism into any descriptive category. The difficulty arises from the unusual makeup of the movement. Many see it as having no discernable parallel in nineteenth century America. Mormonism, on the surface, seems to be a composite of elements that seem foreign to the religious heritage of the American frontier from which it emerges. Yet, upon close examination the movement incorporates many longstanding currents in American religious history.

Early Mormonism can be placed squarely on the shoulders of several concepts prevalent in the thought of both the Pilgrim and the Puritan colonists of New England, and to a lesser extent the German Radical Pietist sects of rural Pennsylvania. The twin concepts of "apostasy" and "restoration," or "resituation," in the case of the Radical Pietists, whether they take the forms of a complete or a partial

12 Making a distinction was important, especially for the Reorganized Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints (RLDS). The RLDS rejected distinctive LDS concepts such as apotheosis, polygamy, and the temple rituals. In the United States the RLDS leadership was instrumental in the fight against polygamy. Initially the German governments were unaware that various Mormon groups existed. The existence of other groups, and their differences, was brought to their attention through several exchanges between the RLDS leadership and the Kultusministerium. Consul Bopp, German Consul in San Francisco, sent a brief to Berlin to outlining the distinct differences between the Utah based LDS, and Missouri varieties of Mormons. This was done after an RLDS missionary was arrested for proselytizing in Prussia. See *GStA PK, I. HA Rep. 76 Kultusministerium, III Sekt. 1 Abt. XIII a Nr. 28 Beiheft Bd. I-IV Sekte der Mormonen, 1853-1917*, Bd. 3, June 28, 1909-April 10, 1912, p. 71. RLDS Missionary C. C. Jöhnck (spelling varies, also spelled Juncke) is expelled from Prussian territory on January 8, 1910. He complains to the U.S. embassy that a mistake has been made as he is not LDS and the Government ban should not apply. In an earlier communiqué to Berlin the German Consulate in San Francisco explains the differences between the RLDS and the Utah Mormons. See also "Kaiserlich Deutschen Konsulat San Francisco Abschrift III, April 8, 1909," in *GStA PK, I. HA Rep. 76 Kultusministerium*, Bd. 3, p. 12. In a letter from Frederick M. Smith, President of the RLDS, to the German Embassy in Washington the differences between the RLDS and the LDS are outlined. This is in response to the RLDS missionaries being hindered on account of them being considered as LDS Mormons. See "Königliche Ministerium des Auswärtigen Angelegenheiten, IIIb 3569," *GStA PK, I. HA Rep. 76 Kultusministerium, III Sekt. 1 Abt. XIII a Nr. 28 Beiheft Bd. I-IV Sekte der Mormonen, 1853-1917*, Bd. 4, April 4, 1912-1917, p. 57. Citations designated *GStA* are in reference to the files of the *Geheimes Staatsarchiv Preußischer Kulturbesitz*, Berlin.

apostasy, and therefore a restoration or reform were both central to Pilgrim, Puritan, and radical Pietist thought. As well, the utopian driven ideology that America<sup>13</sup> was a special place reserved for the elect of God was instrumental in defining the goals and aims of the Puritan colonists in New England.<sup>14</sup> America was to be the central place where, in the words of John Winthrop, “the city upon a hill,” the beacon that would draw all eyes to the North American continent would be created. For the Puritans, America was to become the land where true, or pristine, Christianity was practiced by the elect of God. Much the same as it did with earlier Puritan thought Mormonism incorporated two central themes, important characteristics of American religious culture, evangelicalism and millennialism.<sup>15</sup> Tenets of Radical Pietism also seem to have found their way into early Mormonism. Theosophical notions, esoteric practices and millenarian driven evangelization formed part of the early Mormon worldview.<sup>16</sup> Of course I am speaking in generalities and using the two terms, millennialism and evangelicalism loosely. By evangelicalism I intend to convey the idea of the individual having an emotional religious experience that transforms the individual and provides a strong motivation to transform the world around them. Secondly, the word millennialism conveys the idea of a future state of peace and harmony. At which time, and how this future state is achieved, whether by divine or human action, is irrelevant.

13 Unless otherwise designated the term “America” is used throughout this work as a synonym for the United States of America, or its colonial predecessor.

14 America as a chosen land emerges in several sermons of Jonathan Edwards. Edwards felt that the New Jerusalem, the heavenly city from which Jesus would rule during the Millennium, would descend from Heaven to the American continent.

15 Elements of Puritan thought regarding the establishment of a postmillennial New Jerusalem are best evidenced in the writings of Increase and Cotton Mather. See Cotton Mather, *Magnalia Christi Americana: Or the Ecclesiastical History of New England: From Its First Planting, in the Year 1620, unto the Year of our Lord, 1698*. London: Thomas Parkhurst, at the Bible and Three Crowns, Cheapside, 1702. The belief in the “Declension” of New England society prefatory to the Second Advent gave rise to the emotionalism that prevailed through the Great Awakening. For example see Michael Wigglesworth, *The Day of Doom: Or, a Poetical Description of the Great and Last Judgment: With Other Poems*, 6<sup>th</sup> edn, American News Co., New York (1662), 1867. The sermons of Jonathan Edwards are of particular interest to the discussion especially his sermons dealing with apocalyptic themes. See the sermons of Jonathan Edwards, in Stephen J. Stein (ed.), *The Works of Jonathan Edwards*, vol. 5, *Apocalyptic Writings*, Yale University Press, New Haven, 1977. The volume contains his commentary on the Book of Revelation. For discussion surrounding the millennialism of Puritan New England see C. C. Goen, “Jonathan Edwards: A New Departure in Eschatology,” *Church History* vol. 28, 1950, pp. 25–40. Naoki Onishi, “American Conceptualization of Time and Jonathan Edwards’ Post-Millennialism Reconsidered,” *The Japanese Journal of American Studies*, vol. 15, 2004, pp. 10–36.

16 Aside from the esoteric practices of early Mormonism among the most significant parallels are the concept of a true church, and to separate from Babylon and gather to specific locations to avoid the coming apocalypse.

Many of the historical examinations of Mormonism over the past few decades have neglected to emphasize the parallels and commonalities of Mormonism to other groups in time and place.<sup>17</sup> Rather, they have chosen to emphasize a perceived uniqueness of the birth and growth of the Mormons as if it were placed in upstate New York through divine intervention. Of course, as any academic would conclude, the aspect of divine intervention is really the realm of faith and not of scholarship. Past attempts then have provided no major consensus to aid our understanding of Mormon origins, or in its subsequent development and expansion.

What then is the Latter Day Saint movement? In their common understanding and their common usage, the terms Mormon, Mormonism, Latter Day Saint, and LDS have come to identify one particular group within that movement. That is to say, the terms have come to be used almost exclusively, and often interchangeably, to define the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. The perspective that only one Mormon church exists, that one being headquartered in Utah, and not a larger movement with numerous groups is not difficult to understand. The Mormons of Utah have done an excellent job in controlling their history and the way in which this history is presented. Since the movement's inception, keeping a history has been important.<sup>18</sup> As the Utah based LDS church is the largest within the movement, it does not become difficult to drown out alternative voices or claims to the religious heritage left by Joseph Smith Jr.<sup>19</sup> Most modern histories dealing with the Mormons assume that the body of Saints that followed the remaining Twelve Apostles westward to Utah are the legal and rightful heirs to the Church of Christ founded by Joseph Smith.<sup>20</sup> Of course, the members and the leaders of

17 As the current field of Mormon Studies is predominated by writers and academics with a faith commitment, or writers overtly sympathetic to the movement upholding the uniqueness of Mormonism, a pillar of the movements self definition, becomes a central theme of discussion. Exceptions do exist. See works listed in the bibliography by D. Michael Quinn and Dan Vogel.

18 Mormonism's first official historian was John Whitmer, who was directed to keep a record of the Mormons and their experiences. An official historian has been employed until the 1980s when Leonard J. Arrington and his staff were transferred to the church owned Brigham Young University.

19 For the remainder of this writing Joseph Smith Jr. will be referenced by his more common name Joseph Smith.

20 As confusion may result in the use of names relative to the Latter Day Saint movement I have opted to refer to the church founded by Joseph Smith, and led by him until his death in 1844 as the Church of Christ. This was the legal entity as registered under New York state law in 1830. While the church did undergo several name changes during his life from the original Church of Christ, to the Church of the Latter Day Saints, to the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints by the time of his death in 1844. Judging from the spelling variants use in the names of several older groups with in the movement, and from period documents it appears that the unhyphenated capital D for Days was used rather than the hyphenated small *d* now prevalent in the Utah based church's use of the name. Early Mormon criticisms of other groups centred on their use of Methodist, Lutheran, or Baptist to distinguish

the other groups have historically disputed the claims of the Utah based LDS church as the rightful successor to the original church founded by Joseph Smith.<sup>21</sup> These disputes have in turn led to the factionalism of Mormonism; with each church within the movement extending its claims to the restorative heritage introduced by Smith as being the legitimate heir to the first century Christian church.

Attempts to provide a universally acceptable and historically accurate definition for Mormonism have been unsuccessful. Exactly where the Latter Day Saint movement should be placed within the greater spectrum of the religious traditions of the world has yielded numerous answers. Sect, church, Christian aberration, mystery religion, and new world religion have all been used to describe the movement. By using the term new world religion to describe the Mormons, researchers intend to convey the view that Mormonism presents us with such a

themselves from each other. The Mormons could boast of having the word “Christ” in their name.

- 21 While the Utah church has by and far become the largest of the movement’s groups it is estimated that only 1/3 of the Mormons followed the Quorum of Twelve Apostles west. This is based on my own calculations taking into account several variants. This includes approximating the number of Mormons at the time of Smith’s death believed to be at around 30,000. These numbers were cross referenced with the numbers given in the Inez Smith’s history of the RLDS Church as well as statistics given in the *The Latter Day Saints Millennial Star* giving the number of converts still in Europe. Statistics given by the Strangites as well were used. Finally the Utah territorial census of 1850 was used which listed 10,000 plus as the total inhabitants of Utah Territory. See *Utah Federal Population Census Schedules, Entire territory, 1850*, United States Bureau of the Census, United States National Archives and Records Service, Washington, D.C. Copy in possession of author. See also D. Michael Quinn, *The Mormon Hierarchy: Origins of Power*, Signature Books, Salt Lake City, 1994, pp. 143–264. Quinn deals extensively with the succession question following the death of Smith. Quinn favours apostolic succession and subsequently is in favour of the claims of the LDS church. Gary James Bergera examines the conflict among the Utah leadership on the succession claims in an article appearing in *Dialogue: A Journal of Mormon Thought*. See Gary James Bergera, “The Orson Pratt–Brigham Young Controversies: Conflict Within the Quorums, 1853 to 1868,” *Dialogue: A Journal of Mormon Thought*, vol. 13, no. 2, 1980, pp. 7–58, and in book length form in his *Conflict in the Quorum: Orson Pratt, Brigham Young, Joseph Smith*, Signature Books, Salt Lake City, 2002. Bergera suggests that even among the remaining Quorum of the Twelve Apostles there was disagreement over choosing a single successor to the fallen prophet Joseph Smith. It was felt that the group should govern the church as a collective rather than as a hierarchy under a president. Additional claims such as James Strang’s can be found in his *Book of the Law of the Lord: Being a Translation From the Egyptian of the Law Given to Moses in Sinai. Printed by Command of the King, at the Royal Press*, Saint James, 1856. William D. Russell “King James Strang: Joseph Smith’s Successor,” F. Mark McKiernan, et al (eds), *The Restoration Movement: Essays in Mormon History*, Coronado Press, Lawrence, 1973, pp. 231–256. As well, Steven L. Shields in his *Divergent Paths of the Restoration*, Herald House, Independence, 2001; “The Latter Day Saint Movement: A Study in Survival,” Timothy Miller (ed.), *When Prophets Die: The Postcharismatic Fate of New Religious Movements*, State University of New York Press, Albany, 1991, pp. 59–77, 209–214.

unique and radical reinterpretation of the religious tradition from which it emerged, Christianity, that it stands outside of the host tradition as something completely new. While uniqueness may form a part of what distinguishes a world religion from a simple denomination, or to use a current en vogue term, *new religious movement*, the central distinguishing point of a world religion is its universality. A religious movement must exhibit the ability to transfer itself and to root itself within all cultures and across all historical timelines.

Although it lays claims to being a world movement, universality is something that Mormonism has not yet accomplished. Granted, it is represented in numerous countries and cultures around the globe. And yes, it has been present in these cultures throughout much of its history. Yet it is so closely tied to American culture that its tenets do not translate well outside of North America or into areas not predominately Christian. As long as educational materials, non-native missionaries leading the proselytizing efforts, the placement of non-natives in positions of prominence and the overt attempts to create a homogenous church worldwide are coordinated from the American continent it cannot, and perhaps will not attain universality. It will subsequently remain an American church with the majority of its active membership residing in the traditional area of Zion, in North America. That is to say it will remain a predominately American based church with the majority of active members residing in the intermountain west region from Mexico in the south to Alberta, Canada in the north. While the concept of America as Zion, and the call to gather to Zion has been abrogated, Zion still seems to be firmly rooted in America.

As for the Mormon claims of uniqueness, most of these have been over emphasized within the pages of scholarly pursuits for most of the past century. I do not intend to convey the idea that parallels have not been made between Mormonism and the contemporary milieu from which it emerged. Rather, it is to say that this type of literature is in the minority.

Connections between Mormonism and the esoteric traditions appear in early critical studies of Mormonism. These early criticisms dealt primarily with Smith's involvement with the practice of money digging and his use of seer stones. More recent studies have fleshed out these long ignored connections and placed them within their proper perspective relative to the development of Mormonism.<sup>22</sup> Other studies have concentrated on the relationship of the young Smith to his religious and social environment. They explore his involvement in the revivalism of

22 See Lance Owens, "Joseph Smith and Kabbalah," *Dialogue: A Journal of Mormon Thought*, vol. 27, no. 3, 1994, pp. 117–194; John L. Brooke, *The Refiners Fire: The Making of Mormon Cosmology*, Cambridge University Press, New York, 1994); and D. Michael Quinn, *Early Mormonism and the Magic World View*, rev. & enl. edn, Signature Books, Salt Lake City, 1998 [1987]).

the day, and explain the origin of the Book of Mormon as a direct response, a polemic if you will, to his family situation and greater society.<sup>23</sup>

With much of the current writing dealing with Mormonism, the historical uniqueness of Mormonism is lauded while attempts to draw parallels to the host culture and society are negated based upon little more than a wilful attempt to preserve the perceived uniqueness. For many, Mormonism appeared to have originated in a vacuum, or divine intervention.

What can we say of the Latter Day Saint movement? Is it unique? Or did Joseph Smith found his movement based on borrowed ideas? I believe it can safely be said that little of what Smith introduced into his movement is without parallels in American culture in his time. Granted, some reinterpretation was needed, but little of what Smith introduced was unique. One does not need to look far or force a parallel onto the thought of Joseph Smith to make comparisons to other nineteenth-century ideas. Much of the source material was readily available or easily attainable by Smith in order to develop his ideas and in reaching his conclusions.

While Smith stands as the premier prophet among the Mormons, others were part of the consortium of leaders within early Mormonism. The contributions of early leader Sidney Rigdon should also not be discounted. Mormonism perhaps lost more than their founding prophet in the fall of 1844. The saints that moved westward left Illinois without the central influences of the founding years, Joseph Smith and Sidney Rigdon. The heavens appeared to close with the death of Smith as the Utah church's beliefs centered on the last revelations of their founding prophet. Rigdon would go on to found two additional churches both extensions of his personality.<sup>24</sup>

The view that Smith established a unique movement is understandable. It derives mostly from the lack of scholarly attention devoted to religious groups, contemporaneous with Smith, but which now no longer exist. These movements in

23 D. Michael Quinn examines the religious revival aspect in a recent *Dialogue E paper*, particularly Methodist Camp meetings. Quinn argues that Smith was converted in a religious revival. See D. Michael Quinn, "Joseph Smith's Experience of a Methodist Camp Meeting," *Dialogue: A Journal of Mormon Thought, Dialogue Paperless: E-Paper # 3*. This paper is available at the *Dialogue* website at [www.Dialoguejournal.com](http://www.Dialoguejournal.com). A copy is in the possession of the author. Dan Vogel argues that Smith produced the Book of Mormon to convert his father, a quasi deist, to the validity of the Christian message. This perspective forms a pillar for Smith's adversity towards religious dissent, which he had experienced within his own family. See Dan Vogel, *Joseph Smith: Making of a Prophet*, Signature Books, Salt Lake City, 2004. Again both of these arguments are not new. The involvement of Smith with Methodism was first brought to our attention in the 1830s and formed the basis of criticisms against the claims of Smith as the time periods in which he was receiving theophanies coincided with his tenure as a Methodist exhorter.

24 Rigdon, following his departure in the fall of 1844, founded the Church of Christ. Several years later Rigdon would found the Church of Jesus Christ of the Children of Zion. See Shields, *Divergent Paths of the Restoration*, p. 36.

their time were not obscure groups hidden from the public. In the nineteenth century few would not have been aware of their existence.<sup>25</sup> Yet for much of modern scholarship they remain as footnotes to the histories of groups that survived.

Surveys of American religious history have tended to concentrate on Puritanism, or the dominant traditions such as Methodism, Congregationalism and Presbyterianism.<sup>26</sup> Alternative religions of the nineteenth century are relegated to academic footnotes, or introduced in well meaning treatises designed to stimulate further research interest. Faith communities such as the Shakers, Amana, Zoar, the Perfectionists, Georg Rapp's Harmony, Jemima Wilkinson's Publick Universal Friend, and even the influential Moravian Brethren are, if examined at all, grouped together in a basket of the unusual, or a potpourri of the ecstatic. These groups were the dominant alternative religious communities of the early nineteenth century. Many of the religious contemporaries and competitors to early Mormonism have all but vanished, unlike the Mormons.

Any study dealing with the origins of Mormonism can no longer ignore the alternative religions of the nineteenth century.<sup>27</sup> The similarities in worldview, structure, and purpose between these groups and Mormonism are too striking to ignore. As these alternative religions were prominent on the American cultural landscape it is definitely within Smith's capabilities to have drawn ideas from them that would fulfill his religious requirements as a prophet. A prophet in the nineteenth century and a literary plagiarist in the early twentieth century generally engaged in the same activities. They knowingly borrowed from available sources

25 For a solid treatise of many of these groups see the compilation by Julius Friedrich Sachse, *The German Pietists of Provincial Pennsylvania: 1694–1708*, Printed for the author, Philadelphia, 1895, Julius Friedrich Sachse, *The German Sectarians of Pennsylvania, 1708–1742: A Critical and Legendary History of the Ephrata Cloister and the Dunkers*, 2 vols, Printed for the author, Philadelphia, 1899–1900, Julius Friedrich Sachse, *The Fatherland: (1450–1700) Showing The Part it Bore in the Discovery, Exploration and Development of The Western Continent, With Special Reference to the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania: Pt. I of a narrative and critical history, prepared at the request of the Pennsylvania-German Society*, vol. 7, Pennsylvania-German Society Publications, Philadelphia, 1897.

26 By far the dominant area of study has been Puritanism. Mormonism is unique in the attention that is afforded it. Relative to its size more pages have been devoted to it than the other North American religious movements such as the Adventists, Bible Students Movement, or the Pentecostals.

27 Most of these groups are seen as an eclectic collection of the excesses of nineteenth-century religion. Current scholarship is lacking in this area. Groups such as the Harmonists have been dealt with to large degree. Much of the Moravian Brethren's Archives in Bethlehem, Pennsylvania remain untouched. It may be that many of these early groups contemporaneous with the Mormons were German in origin and are ignored, as the original sources are not readily available in English. Harmony, Zoar, Amana, the Moravian's all left records written in their native German. Anabaptist material from groups such as the Mennonites, and Amish has been translated into English allowing for greater access.

without referencing the source.<sup>28</sup> Of course the standards concerning the use of intellectual property, or academic citation have changed since the nineteenth century so one should not judge them too harshly.

Yet Smith did attempt to create a unique religious organization. Driven by a firm belief in an open canon and an ever growing self-confidence in his eschatological role as God's final end time messenger, the "Prophet of the Dispensation of the Fullness of Time," he saw it as his mission to restore all of the lost secrets pertaining to God. He had therefore concluded that all religions in existence were incorrect. At the most if they possessed or confessed any truth they possessed only partial truth. In order to create an organization containing full truth Smith appears to have consciously drawn from a variety of sources. His sources included a plethora of esoteric traditions and mainstream religion. Jewish Kabbalah, Freemasonry, Second Great Awakening revivalism and utopian idealism all found a home in Smith's Mormonism.

Smith was a magnet that grasped onto divergent currents and undertows in American society and compressed them, whether they fit together or not, into a single movement and presented it to the world as God's final word on all aspects of human life and the afterlife. As we would find in any prophetic movement, if one accepted Smith's prophetic leadership one would also need to accept the religious, political, economic, and social systems, or whatever else that was incorporated into his "fullness of the gospel."

How then should we define Mormonism? How can we develop a workable definition encompassing the various groups within the movement, which often hold radically distinctive positions from each other?<sup>29</sup> A workable solution could read something like the following.

The Latter Day Saint movement can most simply be defined as a collection of religious bodies having their origin in the American state of New York in the

28 In the early 1980s it was learned that Seventh-day Adventist prophetess Ellen G. White had borrowed material that she claimed was received under "inspiration." This caused a re-evaluation of her role within the Seventh-day Adventist Church. See Walter T. Rea, *The White Lie*, M & R Turlock, Publications, 1982. It has also been documented that Word of Faith "Prophet" Kenneth Hagin borrowed extensively from E. W. Kenyon. Hagin also claimed divine inspiration as his source. See Daniel Ray McConnell, *A Different Gospel: Biblical and Historical Insights into the Word of Faith Movement*, rev. edn, Peabody, Hendrickson, 1995.

29 The radicalness of the distinctions between the groups within the movement are best evidenced by the Community of Christ, the church led by the immediate family of Joseph Smith and the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints (Strang). The Community of Christ today rejects much of what has defined Mormonism historically. The group rejects the historicity of the Book of Mormon, rejects the entire temple program and would be considered a liberal protestant church. By comparison the Strangites, who still exist, historically accepted plural marriage, the temple program with its rites and rituals, plus incorporated an animal sacrificial system. In reality the Strangites took Smith's concepts further than Smith himself was able to.