

The Alienation of an Apostle from His Quorum: The Moses Thatcher Case

Edward Leo Lyman

In 1896 Moses Thatcher, a highly capable member of the second-highest ruling body of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, was relieved of his office of apostle. Since this action came soon after he had run for the U.S. Senate without proper consent from his ecclesiastical superiors in the First Presidency of the Church, many contemporaries and recent scholars have seen Thatcher's Democratic affiliation under a strongly Republican First Presidency as the source of conflict (Ivins c1950s; Reasoner, July 1896 and Dec. 1896; Penrose 1896). In fact, this political episode was actually only one final step in a process of alienation that had been developing for at least a decade.

Moses Thatcher was born in 1842 and included among his childhood memories the Mormon expulsion from Illinois, the pioneer trek across the plains to Utah, and the California gold rush. At the age of fifteen, he became a missionary, an activity that would consume more than half of the next twenty years. In 1860, he helped his father locate canal and mill sites in Cache Valley, Utah, and soon emerged as a prominent director of railroad, banking, and other major enterprises. In 1877 he was sustained as Cache Stake president. Church authorities could not fail to note his considerable talents, particularly after his negotiations with President Porfiro Diaz and other high officials of Mexico were instrumental in enabling permanent Mormon settlements in that country. He was ordained an apostle in 1879 and thereafter, Moses Thatcher enjoyed the fullest confidence of the second and third Church presidents, Brigham Young and John Taylor (Tullidge 1889, 129-58; Jensen 1: 244-56; Godfrey 1979).

EDWARD LEO LYMAN received his Ph.D. from the University of California, Riverside, in 1981 in history and his revised dissertation, based on research begun in 1972 as one of the first research fellows appointed by Leonard J. Arrington, then Church Historian, will appear within a year from the University of Illinois Press as Political Deliverance: The Mormon Quest for Utah Statehood. He is the Scoutmaster in Riverside Fourth Ward where his wife, Pam Morrison Lyman, is Relief Society president. They are the parents of five children.

However, at some undetermined point during Taylor's presidency, as Thatcher later acknowledged, relationships deteriorated. Fellow apostle Abraham H. Cannon recalled that, in what must have been the waning days of the Council of Fifty, Thatcher had opposed a proposal that Taylor be crowned "prophet, priest and king." A coolness between Thatcher and Taylor's nephew and counselor in the First Presidency, George Q. Cannon, also may have begun as early as 1886. Abram Cannon reported a conversation with his father on a Thatcher sermon that God would send the harassed Saints a scriptural man "like unto Moses" who would be none other than the resurrected Joseph Smith. Counselor Cannon disagreed sharply (20 Aug. 1886; 2 Dec. 1895). Thatcher later claimed that Counselor Cannon corrected the teachings of an apostle he assumed to be himself through the pages of a Church magazine. He obviously resented this action.

Far more significant in the developing ill will between Thatcher and George Q. Cannon was their mutual involvement in John Beck's Bullion Beck silver mine at Eureka. On 11 June 1883, John Taylor and George Q. Cannon agreed to purchase two-thirds of the 100,000 shares of company stock for \$50,000. Then, on 3 October they set apart 60,000 shares Taylor could control or dispose of "in any manner and for any purpose" that he might deem wise for the work of God. Beck's papers allude to a revelation by Taylor on consecrated mining stock and mention the purchase of the Jackson County temple site and education for LDS youth as possible uses of such funds.

This agreement stipulated that the three partners should sell sufficient shares to reimburse Cannon and Taylor for some money they had advanced Beck. In February 1884, four prominent Cache Valley residents purchased 3809½ shares of the mining stock. Thatcher paid \$5,000; William B. Preston and Marriner W. Merrill each paid \$1,000; and Charles O. Card, \$500 for a total of \$7,500. These men, along with minor holdings by Taylor's clerks, L. John Nuttall and George Reynolds, were apparently the only other stockholders. They too entered into the consecration of Bullion Beck stock, an arrangement probably not widely known beyond this inner circle of participants.

Unfortunately, the Bullion Beck almost at once became embroiled in a disputed claims battle with the neighboring Eureka Hill Mining Company. The lengthy litigation halted most production, while legal expenses and Beck's poor financial management threatened loss of the entire property.

By 1886 George Q. Cannon, worried that involvement in the Bullion Beck might ruin him, concluded with Taylor not to renew Beck's right to operate the mine. They engaged Hiram B. Clawson as mine manager. He was the initial link to a group of prominent Californians who, in mid-March 1887, purportedly purchased the mine and incorporated the Bullion Beck and California Company. Actually, the former owners retained controlling interest in the mine, but the Californians, apparently through highly placed government connections, compromised with the Eureka Hill company owners and saved the Bullion Beck mine from threatened loss (A. Cannon, 20 Aug. 1886; John Beck to George J. Taylor, 5 Dec. 1887).

Just at this time, President John Taylor, in hiding to avoid prosecution for polygamy, was lapsing into his final illness. George Q. Cannon conducted much of the complex business of the Church alone, a challenging affair because Taylor would sometimes approve a transaction but later not remember the decision. Finally, at an important meeting of several Church leaders on 7 July 1887, Cannon confessed the necessity of taking action without consulting the fast-declining Taylor and called upon Apostle John W. Taylor to corroborate his father's condition. During these proceedings, Cannon disclosed that he had been compelled to conduct much Church business unilaterally for the past four months.

Cannon's action disturbed several fellow apostles who had previously expressed private apprehensions about his power. Later that day, Moses Thatcher commented to Apostle Heber J. Grant that those transactions might need to be investigated later since, he claimed to have learned, they were not all "as straight as they might have been" (Grant, 7 July 1887). Thatcher undoubtedly wondered how much the incapacitated Taylor had to do with crucial Bullion Beck decisions, which adversely affected his interests.

Within three weeks, President Taylor was dead. On 3 August 1887, the surviving apostles convened to organize an interim governing body of the Church. Counselors George Q. Cannon and Joseph F. Smith resumed their places in the Quorum of the Twelve and Wilford Woodruff, as senior member, acted as leader of the Church until the First Presidency was reorganized. When the motion was made for Taylor's former counselors to be reinstated in their quorum, Grant, whose journal reports the meeting, urged that certain questions about Cannon needed clarification first. His grievances were really with George Q.'s brother Angus M., president of Salt Lake Stake. Several other apostles agreed that Angus was indeed "tyrannical and insubmissive to apostles." Then Moses Thatcher elaborated at length on the slights, great and small, George Q. Cannon had supposedly dealt to his fellow apostles. Cannon expressed surprise at the allegations, denied some of the most grievous offenses, and, obviously angry, looked squarely at Thatcher while he vowed that no "one man could deprive him of his position as apostle" (Grant, 3 Aug. 1887).

On 5 October, at the next regular meeting of the apostles, Grant recorded continued efforts to reconcile the quorum members. George Q. Cannon expressed pleasure that he had been given opportunity to further explain the causes of misunderstanding as he perceived them, clarified his actions at great length, and stated that the mental anguish he had suffered from the August criticisms had pained him more than anything he had previously experienced in his life. He pleaded for forgiveness of any past slights or errors in judgment. Moses Thatcher would not let matters rest. He confessed that he still harbored unpleasant feelings and again listed offenses Cannon had committed against him. Several senior quorum members, including Wilford Woodruff, Lorenzo Snow, Brigham Young, Jr., and Joseph F. Smith, upheld Cannon. Apostle Franklin D. Richards charged Thatcher and Grant with a lack of charity toward Cannon. Cannon, conciliatory and submissive, recalled that he had

been unable to influence Taylor and argued that, although he had been the instrument for carrying out Taylor's decisions, he should not be responsible for them (Grant, 5–6, 10 Oct. 1887).

The opposition to George Q. Cannon as a counselor to Wilford Woodruff was clearly a factor in delaying the official organization of the First Presidency after the death of John Taylor. The succession of the senior apostle to the presidency was by no means automatic at that time. More than a year and a half later, Wilford Woodruff testified that the Lord had assured him the presidency should be organized with Cannon as a counselor. Thatcher said he was "glad to hear that the Lord had manifested to President Woodruff that President Cannon would be one of his counselors and regretted he had not also manifested the same to him (Grant, 5 April 1889). Cannon offered to remove himself as a possibility for the presidency, but Thatcher was "roundly criticized for challenging Woodruff's decision," and the new First Presidency was unanimously sustained in April 1889.

These negative exchanges between Cannon and Thatcher frequently mentioned the Bullion Beck shares set apart for Taylor's purposes. According to the 2 July 1887 transfer papers, properly witnessed and signed by John Taylor and George Q. Cannon, Taylor conveyed control of the so-called dedicated stock to Cannon with the distinct stipulation that Cannon would not be accountable to the Church but would have absolute control as long as the proceeds were not used for his private benefit. Reacting to Thatcher's criticisms, Cannon informed his associates that he could no longer hold the stock technically belonging to Thatcher (Grant, 5 Oct. 1887).

Yet in the ensuing months, Cannon reconsidered and concluded he had no right to break up consecrated shares of stock he had promised to administer despite the dissatisfaction of Thatcher and some of his associates. During the next year, while Cannon served a prearranged shortened prison sentence for cohabitation, mine-related matters so angered Thatcher that in December 1888, he threatened to sue. For Latter-day Saints schooled in resolving such matters privately or in ecclesiastical courts, this threat was so grave that Joseph F. Smith warned Thatcher if he took such a step he would "regret it as long as [he] live[d]" (Stock Controversy). Thatcher rethought his position and agreed to submit the dispute to arbitration within the Quorum (Grant, 3 Dec. 1888).

In explanation of his anger, Thatcher wrote Wilford Woodruff on 5 and 7 December (Stock Controversy) that Cannon had promised to give him no further trouble on his portion of the "pooled stock." Then, in mid-September 1888, he learned of a \$10,000 dividend declared by Bullion Beck from which he had received only two-fifths of what he expected. When a 3 December dividend of \$50,000 repeated the pattern, Thatcher concluded that Cannon had violated his promise. The company secretary informed him that no adjustments concerning the withheld pooled-stock dividends could be made without Cannon's express permission, final confirmation in Thatcher's view of Cannon's unfairness.

As Thatcher wrote Woodruff 15 December 1888 (Stock Controversy), his grievance against Cannon had been intensified when the two-fifth dividends were further discounted by 25 percent to pay California Company officials

Thatcher and his associates did not recognize as fully entitled to the money. Cannon contended that they had in fact earned the right to one-quarter of the proceeds from ore sales. But according to Thatcher, after the suit with Eureka Hill Company had been withdrawn, there had been an unauthorized change in the agreements so that the original mine owners neither received the stipulated sale price for part of the mining stock nor retained control of the management. He opposed what he considered an *ex post facto* agreement allowing them to manage the mine without the monetary compensation he understood the original owners were entitled to.

As the arbitration process began, George Q. Cannon, still in prison, reluctantly wrote out his point of view on 4 December. Denying any wrongdoing, he implied his intention to maintain the dedicated stock proceeds as a separate and independent fund. That was where the crucial difference of opinion lay. Thatcher and other stockholders clearly wanted to withdraw legitimately purchased stock from an arrangement they considered nullified by Taylor's death. Cannon believed himself to be under solemn obligation to maintain the consecrated stock and acted accordingly.

When the Quorum scrutinized the matter in early 1889 after Cannon's release, they determined that Thatcher had technically received all that was due him. But the judgment was based solely on the unconsecrated shares of stock and Thatcher was hesitant to press the consecration matter. Likely he sensed that some of the apostles, particularly Woodruff, had no desire to pursue such unpleasant business while the Quorum was in dire need of greater internal harmony and understanding. As it was, this attempt at arbitration permanently alienated Cannon from Thatcher (Penrose 1896).

By midsummer of 1889, John Taylor's heirs joined Thatcher and his associates in a successful effort to have the dedicated stock reconveyed to the original owners. John Beck, who had been hiding from his creditors and anti-polygamy deputies in Germany, gladly joined the Taylor-Thatcher faction to regain control of the mine (Beck to George J. Taylor, 29 April 1889; A. Cannon, 15 July and 1–2 August 1889; Thatcher to C. O. Card, 28 August 1889).

John Beck returned to Utah, paid off the loan notes against him held by Church treasurer James Jack, and received the Bullion Beck stock certificates that had been held as collateral at the end of June 1889 (Beck Notes). Since he became indebted to the Thatcher Brothers Bank in Logan, his new associates had undoubtedly made him an attractive refinancing offer in exchange for getting his corporate votes.

On 6 August, the day after the dedicated stock was returned to Thatcher and his associates, an important Bullion Beck Company meeting was held. George Q. Cannon delegated his three oldest sons to act in his stead. Frank J. Cannon was the only one elected to the board as the other stockholders "pulled together to get control of the mine" (A. Cannon, 6 Aug. 1889). Thatcher was made president and H. B. Clawson was replaced by Alonzo Hyde, John Taylor's son-in-law.

Abram Cannon notes that Alexander Badlam appeared the next day in behalf of the California Company to confirm the transfer of one-fourth of the

mining stock he and his associates claimed for negotiating the compromise with the Eureka Hill Company. These arrangements were approved, with a completion date in January 1890. But by then, those controlling the mine were less inclined to carry out the transaction. Wilford Woodruff expressed strong disapproval of withholding the stock from the Californians. Apostle John W. Taylor defended his associates' actions by expressing suspicion that H. B. Clawson and his California relative, Isaac Trumbo, were conspiring to defraud Bullion Beck stockholders of shares they were not entitled to (A. Cannon, 20 January 1890).

Wilford Woodruff, feeling that a lawsuit would endanger the whole property, privately encouraged the Cannon faction to protest against Moses Thatcher for "his jeopardizing the interest" of all the stockholders in the Bullion Beck mine "by failing to fulfill his agreement in delivering the California Company their share of the stock" (A. Cannon, Journal, 24, 31 Jan. 1890). In the same private interview with Abraham Cannon, Joseph F. Smith detailed Isaac Trumbo's lobbying services and expressed the First Presidency's conviction that to antagonize these men might jeopardize Church interests throughout the country (A. Cannon, 24, 31 Jan. 1890; Woodruff, 31 March 1890). Trumbo and Clawson subsequently played a crucial role in achieving Utah statehood (Lyman 1981, 137-85).

The struggle continued. George Q. Cannon's stock was "virtually cut off from representation" by other members of the board of directors (A. Cannon, 14 March 1890). Finally, Wilford Woodruff designated Joseph F. Smith to act as mediator to prevent the mining affairs from being taken into court. On 5 May 1890, Joseph F. Smith wrote to Isaac Trumbo to report that he had met several times with Thatcher to establish a price for the stock. The original arrangement apparently gave the California Company the option of purchasing Bullion Beck stock at \$4 per share for a limited time. Thatcher and his associates balked. The mine was paying some \$250,000 dividends and was worth millions in 1890. Smith warned Trumbo not to trust the troublesome Utah faction.

The Bullion Beck scars were permanent. Abram Cannon and Grant both recorded in their journals a 28 January 1891 meeting of the First Presidency and Quorum to talk out past difficulties and secure greater internal harmony. President Wilford Woodruff confessed he had "seen things in Moses Thatcher which he did not like," specifically his actions regarding the Bullion Beck. Thatcher agreed that he had sensed this tenion and attempted to justify his actions. In a conciliatory mood, he affirmed "he would sooner be in the current with his brethren and lose all that he had than not be one with his brethren and retain his possessions" (Grant, 28 Jan. 1891). George Q. Cannon said that Thatcher and his associates had treated him unjustly in mining matters but such were now things of the past. Joseph F. Smith expressed belief that the Thatcher faction had offended most seriously in not showing "proper respect to the counsel of the First Presidency" when they were attempting to resolve differences with the Californians (A. Cannon, 28, 30 January 1891; Grant 28 January 1891).

This would in fact prove to be Thatcher's major offense. The First Presidency constantly complained of his disregard for their authority, which others conceded extended beyond the ecclesiastical realm. Often in the decision-making process, the First Presidency and Twelve discussed openly and exchanged views freely, but a decision, with or without consensus, required loyal support. Thatcher's independent-mindedness was valued during deliberations; but although he usually voiced approval when a decision was made, he did not always uphold it loyally if he disagreed with it, a course that was first perplexing to his colleagues and ultimately intolerable. Thatcher had established this pattern with the Bullion Beck episode and repeated it when political differences erupted.

The early months of 1891 were the beginning of the difficult and sometimes controversial division of Latter-day Saints along national political party lines. Moses Thatcher had long been involved in the old Mormon People's party as one of its most persuasive orators and writers. Among the few items of his political correspondence still extant is a report to other apostles he coauthored with Franklin D. Richards and John R. Winder in September 1888 advising against the Mormons uniting with Gentile Democrats in the territory. The document also observed that the "great majority of the Saints respected the advice and counsel of the quorum in political as in other matters, and obey it in most instances, at times even against their own judgement" (Utah Politics). Such a statement certainly presupposed involvement of Church authorities in politics, which Thatcher later abhorred but clearly condoned at the time.

The First Presidency recognized the need to distribute the Latter-day Saints between the national parties and also foresaw the need to keep the People's party members from following their political leaders en masse into the ranks of the Democrats. A Republican party defaulting to anti-Mormon Gentiles would perpetuate the political-religious separation which had plagued the state in the past. Overtures from some national GOP leaders indicated great interest in altering the former opposition to the Mormons.

Consequently, the First Presidency approved the diligent, if highly partisan, efforts of Apostle John Henry Smith in the summer of 1891 to help organize the Utah Republican party and recruit prominent local Mormon leaders. Since other General Authorities who preferred the Democrats were simultaneously encouraged to remain silent on political matters, some, notably Moses Thatcher, expressed distinct displeasure. For the next year, Thatcher voiced his dissent on several occasions (Grant, 7 July 1891; A. Cannon, 12 Jan. 1892). Apostle Francis M. Lyman would record on 4 August 1893 that "the policy of the Presidency was clearly defined and made to appear that bro[ther] Moses had been working against instead of in accordance with it."

The conflict became public in May 1892 when Thatcher was invited to address the Utah Democratic Territorial Convention at Ogden. His speech was long and partisan. One of the most controversial portions was construed by the opposing press, including Frank J. Cannon's *Ogden Standard*, to imply that Jesus Christ would have been a Democrat and Lucifer a Republican. Thatcher protested that he had been misquoted, but his Church superiors were

already taking action. President Woodruff assigned John Henry Smith to respond to Thatcher's speech. When Smith reported the First Presidency discussion of the offending remarks in his journal, he indicated that the "satanic part" was a key cause of the reaction (17, 20, 23 May 1892; Lyman 16 June 1892). John Henry Smith and Joseph F. Smith published a letter in the *Ogden Standard* protesting references to Jesus Christ in a political context and adding that to connect the Savior to the Democrats might also make him "accountable for the innocent blood of our martyred kindred" — a reference to the murders of Joseph and Hyrum Smith which took place, they claimed, in a Democratic locality. (*Ogden Standard*, 23, 24 May 1892).

Thatcher countered with a letter to the editor of the *Salt Lake Herald*, 25 May, expressing regret at the Smiths' "intense partisan feeling" and explaining that Jesus contended for the exercise of every man's individuality and free agency while Lucifer sought exactly the opposite. His own tone was conciliatory; he earnestly desired "to be one with [his] brethren" in religious matters but affirmed his independence in political matters, especially "in reference to the fundamental principles dividing Democracy and Republicanism." Thatcher declared recent GOP efforts related to tariffs and bounties "oppressive and harmful to the masses" although he declared a willingness to encourage others to entertain and maintain opposite views.

At a meeting of the Twelve on 7 July, Quorum president Lorenzo Snow admitted that the political positions taken by Moses Thatcher and John Henry Smith had caused him "serious concern" and he expressed his determination not to allow such matters to divide the Quorum. Comments by the combatants, who had both married daughters of Lorin Farr, indicated no hard feelings, though neither made any political concessions (Grant, 7 July 1892; A. Cannon, 12 July 1892; Lyman, 12 July 1892).

On 30 July, Joseph F. Smith took Thatcher to task in a comparatively private two-hour meeting witnessed only by Lyman and George Q. Cannon. Thatcher countered some of the charges persuasively, according to Lyman, protesting at one point that Smith "had been stuffed with lies about him for fourteen years." Smith warned that the day would come when Thatcher would "regret the stand he had taken upon the question of church and state which tends to prevent the Presidency from counseling the people on political matters." Thatcher retorted he never would and was not afraid to stand by his position.

Thus the battle was joined between the dissident apostle's personal convictions and what his fellows perceived as the rightful prerogative of the First Presidency. Thatcher undoubtedly could foresee that the conflict was irreconcilable and he would ultimately lose, yet he did not seem to hesitate in taking his stand against what he considered undue interference with his rights as a citizen.

Another episode centered on a letter a First Presidency clerk sent to his brother-in-law, a bishop in Cache Valley, advising that Church leaders would be pleased if more Saints there voted Republican. This document ultimately fell into the hands of the Democratic Territorial Committee who angrily con-

fronted the First Presidency on the matter. Abraham Cannon, visiting Logan, recorded in his journal that several reliable men told him Thatcher himself had had possession of the letter before it fell into hostile hands (A. Cannon, 30, 31 July, 2 Aug. 1892).

At a meeting of the First Presidency and Twelve on 4 August, Joseph F. Smith again "arraigned" Thatcher for his political actions, and expressed "hurt" at the strong-minded Democrat's course. He enumerated the occasions in which he felt Thatcher "had been in error, and in opposition to the advice of the presidency in the course he had taken" (A. Cannon, 4 Aug. 1892). Thatcher responded humbly, explaining his motives, denying possession of the clerk's letter, and promising to abide by the counsel of his brethren. George Q. Cannon explained that the First Presidency favored the Republicans then for the "good and deliverance of the people." At the close of these remarks, reportedly delivered with "considerable warmth," all present voted to "carry out the wishes of the presidency in regard to politics, as well as everything else" (A. Cannon, 4 Aug. 1892).

Yet at the close of the meeting, Lyman talked with Thatcher and surmised that he was "not quite satisfied with the way things went in the council." Thatcher's partisan views on the tariff and particularly his criticism of bounties essential to the infant Utah sugar industry, a project particularly important to Woodruff, had greatly dismayed his fellows. Woodruff had pointedly forbidden Thatcher to further express such views. Since bounties and tariffs were the central issue between the political parties, this injunction amounted to a gag. Furthermore, as Lyman recorded in his summary of the meeting, the Presidency forbade apostles to "take up political or other work without their knowledge and approval" (Lyman, 4 Aug. 1892).

Before participating in the ensuing congressional campaign, Thatcher and fellow Democrat B. H. Roberts, one of the Seven Presidents of the Seventy, checked with the First Presidency and were instructed not take a prominent role (Lyman, 11 Oct. 1892). Even though the contest heated up and engendered bitter personal feelings, Thatcher remained generally aloof from the infighting.

After the election, Apostle Franklin D. Richards, an interested but restrained Democrat, recorded a meeting of the Twelve and First Presidency 12 January 1893 to consider "the real or supposed misunderstanding or misapprehension existing between President Joseph F. Smith and Moses Thatcher over or about their political practices in the late political campaign." Richards felt the meeting ended with unity and understanding, but Lyman correctly recognized that "the root of the matter was not reached," so far as the differences between Smith and Thatcher were concerned (Lyman, 11-13 Jan. 1893). Lyman privately tried to persuade Thatcher of his error "in striking out in politics on his own hook" but without success.

President Joseph F. Smith felt so strongly at odds with Thatcher that at one point he refused to partake of the sacrament with the other Church leaders so long as he held such resentments. As Lyman recorded (11-12 Jan. 1892), the apostles decided to use their regular meetings scheduled to begin March 21

and remain together "from day to day" until they had "obliterated all differences, if any there be, so [they could] meet the dedication of the [Salt Lake] temple in perfect condition." Clearly they recognized that without harmony among them, they would impede the hoped-for spiritual outpouring that had made the dedication of the Kirtland Temple so memorable a generation earlier.

At the March meeting, the three members of the First Presidency spoke separately. They pointedly asked if the apostles considered it the First Presidency's right to dictate a political course among others. All present agreed that they had such a right. Abraham Cannon noted that the remarks were directed especially at Moses Thatcher, who joined his fellows in pledging willingness to make right any instances in which "he had failed to show proper respect to the counsel of his superiors." His political activities and views comprised a good deal of the afternoon's discussion and this time even Lyman recorded that good had come of the discussion.

The next day, Thatcher became so ill he had to return home to Logan. The meetings continued without him. Woodruff assured all present that they were in good standing and would never fall away from the truth they mutually espoused. But Lyman and Abram Cannon's journal entries are both worded in a way that excluded Thatcher. Each member of the First Presidency spoke on Thatcher's actions and, Cannon says, "felt to condemn his course during the past few months, especially in regard to political matters." As the meeting progressed, all of the apostles acknowledged that Thatcher's course had been "radically wrong," and that he must be "brought to see that he had been working against the policy of the Presidency, thus heading a faction against the Presidency and bringing them to disgrace in the eyes of the Saints" (Lyman, 23 March 1893). The consensus was that Thatcher must confess his "improper course and ask pardon for the same" before he would be permitted to enter the temple (A. Cannon, 23 March 1892). Abram Cannon also recorded that Lorenzo Snow significantly predicted that if any apostle stood in opposition to the presidency "the Lord would cause such persons to repent, or he would remove them out of the way." The First Presidency decided to leave the matter to Thatcher's quorum to handle as they deemed best.

Within a week, Apostles Lyman and John W. Taylor took the train to Logan. Thatcher welcomed them cordially and invited them to dinner. But, recorded Lyman in his journal 28 March 1893,

When Bro. Moses learned the object of our visit he manifested a very bad spirit and would not hear any more of the complaints from the presidency. We would continue to tell him what the complaint was against him and the presidency and twelve were one in censuring him severely. He had a spirit of justification and defiance and of cross charges against his brethren. He charged me with self righteousness and then said we are all more or less guilty of it. His talk was very bad. We were cool but determined he should know and hear all we had to say. I drew his attention to the spirit he was influenced by in contrast with the spirit of the Lord he enjoyed at other times when I had labored with him. He held that he had just as much of the spirit of the Lord as I did. He said John and I would yet be crowded upon just as he was now being oppressed. He felt it was tyranny to labor with him so much when he is so

sick. He wanted no association with a crowd of men that would consent to such treatment as he has had from the presidency. He would never consent to such methods, he was not built that way. When Elder Taylor talked to him as he did as much as me, he would make complaint against Bro. Taylor for something he had said. His heart softened some after we had labored with him till after midnight.

The apostles left for Salt Lake City the next day, hoping Thatcher would yet make the confession deemed necessary. In his report to fellow General Authorities, Lyman mentioned Thatcher felt sorry further misunderstandings existed and expressed his own confidence that though there were yet issues to resolve, Thatcher “would finally come to the point to make all things right” (29–30 March 1893).

Before Thatcher was well enough to travel to Salt Lake City, Woodruff received an undated letter from Thatcher’s personal physician, William Parkinson, who said Thatcher was suffering from a “very severe and serious digestive trouble” — probably a chronic stomach ulcer which became more acute under stress. He requested the Church leaders’ cooperation in “forbidding him all mental worry and anxiety” and suggested releasing him temporarily from the demands of his Church callings. Parkinson stated Thatcher had no desire to shirk his responsibilities but that overdoing could be fatal. Woodruff wrote to Thatcher 31 March encouraging him not to face the rigors of general conference and the temple dedication. Thatcher was not well enough to attend the apostles’ meeting preliminary to the dedicatory sessions on 3 April. However, he telegraphed his intention to come and, despite his continuing weakness, arrived the next evening while an apostles’ meeting was in session. The agenda quickly became, in Lyman’s words, a “labor of two or three hours” with him in “getting him to yield that he was wrong” (4 April 1893). Finally Thatcher “confessed he had been wrong in the position he had taken in regard to political matters and that he desired the fellowship of the presidency and his quorum.” It was nearly midnight when the brethren were assured that he could “see and feel as the rest did” on these points. They finally adjourned with “great joy” that union had been fully established within their body (Richards, 3 April 1893).¹

Sunday, 6 April was the anniversary of the Church’s organization and the key day in the twelve-day temple dedication. Thatcher apparently attended most of the sessions but his only participation was to offer a benediction on 11 April. That same day, the apostles met informally for the first time in their temple council room. The first prayer offered there was Franklin D. Richard’s blessing on Thatcher’s head. Just three days later, on 14 April, a note arrived from family members that Thatcher had suffered a serious relapse and that he was so close to death that there was “nothing that man can do” to help him (Lyman, 16 April 1893). Each day thereafter, his brethren not only sought

¹ Abram Cannon, Journal, 18 May 1893, recalling the night as April 5, recorded: “My quorum met to consider the case of Moses Thatcher. At first he strongly opposed the brethren in their efforts to reconcile him with the Presidency, but after each one had spoken, and all were unanimous in their statements that he was in the wrong, he yielded, and asked the forgiveness of the brethren, and promised to seek the forgiveness of the Presidency on the morrow before entering the temple.”

divine intervention in his behalf but several mentioned him fondly in their public sermons (Lyman, 11, 16–17 April 1893; Grant, 24 April 1893).

Thatcher's condition continued precarious for over a month. His only nourishment for a period was one teaspoonful of buttermilk per hour. But by July, his family reported he was recuperating at a campsite in Logan Canyon. When he rejoined his quorum in October, he testified humbly that his recovery had been brought about largely through the faith and prayers they had offered in his behalf, for which he expressed deep gratitude (Grant, 4 Oct. 1893).

In November 1893, Thatcher had another relapse. Although he recovered relatively quickly, his attendance at meetings of the Twelve became infrequent. On several occasions during 1894, his absences were cited as a partial cause of new disharmony with the First Presidency and the loss of some of the inspiration to which he was entitled.

During the fall of 1893, Church leaders had adopted a policy crucial to Thatcher's subsequent and ultimately decisive difficulties with them. Though not ill, he had not attended the 12 October meeting when ten other apostles discussed whether general, stake, and ward leaders should accept political nominations. The conclusion was no (Lyman, 12, 14 Oct. 1893). Millard Stake President Thomas C. Callister wrote to Wilford Woodruff 28 October 1893 (Woodruff Papers) indicating that local Church leaders were already nominated and asking special permission to remain in the campaigns. The permission was granted. But it was clear that future candidacies would be discouraged.

The Utah election in the autumn of 1894 was especially important because Utah had finally been granted an enabling act to form a state constitution. Thus, candidates for the constitutional convention would enter the contest along with congressional candidates. Woodruff made it clear in July that he wanted the constitutional convention to be conducted in as "nonpartisan" a manner as possible (F. Lyman, 26 July 1894). As the election approached in September, Thatcher and Franklin D. Richards, apparently at the behest of other Mormon Democrats, sought an appointment with the First Presidency. They voiced concern about the implications of banning all Church leaders from participation in the framing of the constitution. The First Presidency expressed willingness for Mormon political activists to "make all proper efforts on both sides to carry their parties — only not slander, throw dirt and demean each other" (Richard, 14 Sept. 1894). The following day, Apostles Thatcher, Richards, and Grant were prominently seated on the platform during the Democratic Territorial convention. Word of the altered policy quickly spread;² and among the victorious contestants were ten members of stake presidencies, fifteen of bishoprics, and General Authorities John Henry Smith, Moses Thatcher, William B. Preston, and B. H. Roberts (Richards, 14–15 Sept. 1894; Grant, 15, 17, 21, 17 Sept. 1894).

As the Constitutional Convention got underway in April 1895, the Democratic press frequently accused John Henry Smith, a Republican, of using his

² Lyman, *Journal*, 27 Sept. 1894, correctly states that the policy "was not properly clarified. While some interpreted the new position allowing political participation broadly," others felt it applied only to "the Constitutional Convention, not to ordinary politics."

position as permanent convention chairman to promote partisan politics, but it was Thatcher and Roberts who again incurred the displeasure of President Woodruff and his counselors. Roberts opposed woman suffrage while the First Presidency was in favor. Thatcher, ill again and under medical care, wrote an apology for his absences to his convention colleagues. Comments on the letter's somewhat partisan contents actually provoked the first political conflict of the convention (Ivins 1957). At the same time, Roberts was criticized in a council meeting for having done great damage to the Church. Thatcher was once again reprimanded "for his failure to seek counsel of the Presidency in regard to the Constitutional Convention" (A. Cannon, 25 April 1895).

As the apostles convened before April conference in 1895, Lyman and Abram Cannon both noted on 4 April John W. Taylor's prediction that Thatcher was in danger of death if he did not accept the direction of his leaders, but that if he would sustain the First Presidency and "feel alright in politics and everything else" he would be made whole and strong. Taylor confessed that his spirit was "bowed down" with reference to Thatcher (Grant 4 April 1898).

On 22 April, Brigham Young, Jr., lamented to his journal: "Alas one of our number seems to persist in walking alone and tho weak in body profess to be strong in the Lord." Young expressed fear for his brother's life and, significantly, for his "standing in his quorum."

Over the years, a considerable number of Moses Thatcher's fellow General Authorities had felt the lash of his tongue. Both counselors in the First Presidency, John Henry Smith, Heber J. Grant, Brigham Young, Jr., and Franklin D. Richards had so suffered. Usually Thatcher ironed out the differences, but a residue of negative feeling undoubtedly remained and the pattern was not a pleasant one (Grant, 10 April 1889, 14 Jan. 1891, 3 April 1895; Lund, 5 Jan. 1897.) Early in 1895, Thatcher added Apostle Marriner W. Merrill to the list of those hurt when Thatcher incorrectly said at Paris, Idaho, that Merrill had been "rebuked" by the First Presidency for teaching politics too strongly (Merrill 1937, 184-85).

Quorum of the Twelve reactions recorded by Grant and Abram Cannon between 3 and 17 January provide considerable insight into Thatcher's status among the Twelve and First Presidency. Cannon observed that his father and Wilford Woodruff were anxious that Thatcher's actions be examined thoroughly enough to bring about an essential change in his attitude for "he has not been for a long time in full harmony with his quorum or the presidency" and, according to George Q. Cannon, Thatcher "would lose the faith unless he repents." President Woodruff expressed regret at Thatcher's course, saying he believed it resulted from insufficient association with the Quorum. At that same time, Woodruff charged, Thatcher "had persistently disregarded the wishes of the presidency in regard to his position in politics" (Cannon, 9 Jan. 1895). Joseph F. Smith later expressed the belief that Thatcher had been "dishonest in his actions politically and had continuously opposed his quorum and the presidency" — the cause of Smith's "hurt feelings" toward him (A. Cannon, 14 Jan. 1895). President Woodruff confessed similar sentiments

because of Thatcher's "continual opposition to the course which the presidency desired" (A. Cannon, 14 Jan. 1895).

Thus, long before the final crisis, Moses Thatcher had exhausted the patience of his colleagues. Several had concluded that it was only a matter of time before the final break came. In light of how quickly stubborn dissenters had been excommunicated under Joseph Smith and Brigham Young, the forbearance of Thatcher's associates in the face of what they must have considered repeated insubordination and rebellion is striking.

The final breach developed unpretentiously. In September 1895, Utah Democratic strategists, probably hoping to capitalize on some of the Church influence they would soon be bitterly accusing their opponents of using, nominated B. H. Roberts as their candidate for Congress and designated Moses Thatcher as one of the men their party would select as U.S. Senator should the Democrats garner a majority of seats in the first state legislature. These developments initially caused little stir, even among General Authorities. On 26 September at a Quorum meeting, Thatcher's spotty attendance was criticized; and Heber J. Grant, who had declined a possible Democratic gubernatorial nomination, remarked that Thatcher should not have accepted his candidacy "without having had a full and free chat with his brethren of the apostles and also with the first presidency" (Grant, 26 Sept. 1895). Less than a week later, Thatcher attended a Quorum meeting in the temple marked by good feelings. In fact, the meeting was kept short so as to not fatigue him (Grant, 1 Oct. 1895).

However, later on the same day, Brigham Young, Jr., who had also been mentioned as a possible Democratic candidate for governor, met Thatcher by chance on the street and advised him to talk freely to President Woodruff about "some political complications." Thatcher first refused, then agreed to weigh the suggestion, but accused Young and most of his associates as being "too pliable" and having not only "failed to maintain their individuality" but also their "manhood" (Young, 1 Oct. 1895).

The next day, Thatcher told Woodruff he did not see how Woodruff could "dictate" to him or anyone else in political matters. The presidency, he felt, was trying to deprive him of his free agency, a principle which had figured largely in Thatcher's sermons for many years (Young, 2 Oct. 1895). As his later defenses would make clear, he relied heavily on statements by Joseph Smith which included independence in political affairs as well (Godfrey 1979).

While such arguments were persuasive to a point, they failed to account for the acknowledged role of subsequent prophets to alter the policy and for the peculiar position of General Authorities pledged to lifelong religious service. Brigham Young, Jr., who attended Thatcher's meeting with Woodruff on 2 October, conceded the strong case for free agency, but found it a far greater offense to "throw down the responsibilities of his priesthood and pick up politics without consulting the authorities under which he has covenanted to labor." Wrote Young, Thatcher "throws away the Priesthood and hugs politics, rendering fealty to the world at the same time inconstant to his former

vows.” Lorenzo Snow would agree a year later with this evaluation in a letter to several young Mormon businessmen, 30 November 1896: “If he [Thatcher] did not value his Apostleship and Priesthood as of the very first consideration he was not worthy to hold them, and his subsequent course shows that he held them in great esteem in theory but in very small esteem in practice” (Penrose 1896, 27).

Joseph F. Smith may have interpreted Thatcher’s comments in the same way, for a few days later at a priesthood session of conference — traditionally the last instruction to local leaders — he stressed that the Church had living oracles whose counsel should be sought in all matters. Specifically, if a priesthood holder undertook to do as he pleased without thought of the directions of his superiors, he was on dangerous ground. A perhaps innocent illustration was one of the apostles and one of the Seven Presidents of Seventies who had recently “done wrong in accepting obligations without first consulting and obtaining the consent of those who preside over them” (A. Cannon, 7 Oct. 1895). This obvious reference to Thatcher and Roberts was followed by asserting: “No man surrenders his manhood by seeking the advice of his superiors.” Presidents Cannon and Woodruff endorsed these comments, Cannon candidly confessing that he was “glad Brother Smith had said what he had, but said he would not have said it” (Grant, 7 Oct. 1895).

The stage was set for perhaps the bitterest political controversy in Utah’s history. Some Democrats naturally interpreted Smith’s comments as a threat to their campaign. Party leaders reconvened their territorial convention and Thatcher joined with Roberts and other avid Democrats in affirming that there should be no interfering with politics by Church authorities (Lyman 1981, 533–40).

In doing so, they allied themselves against the other Mormon leaders with former Utah Territorial judge Orlando W. Powers, whom Brigham Young, Jr., had called the “chief scoundrel in Utah” and saw as the personification of the devil. He continues in his 1 November 1895 journal notation by lamenting, “My confidence in this splendid man [Thatcher] is entirely or, almost entirely gone” because he has “gone over to the enemy.”

The Democrats were soundly defeated, and the Republicans garnered all state offices and the right to select the U.S. Senators. Thatcher and Roberts would continue to nurture political ambitions and each would subsequently make another race for the same offices, but the immediate public storm gradually subsided. The Mormon General Authorities continued to hope for evidence of a change of heart in their recalcitrant brethren, but Young and Grant both noted after an 8 January 1896 meeting that Thatcher continued to ignore the First Presidency and most of the apostles.

Woodruff had already announced in mid-December the need to investigate the conduct of both Thatcher and Roberts before they could continue their work (A. Cannon, 12 Dec. 1895). Lorenzo Snow did not feel justified in presenting their names for a sustaining vote from the Saints at the next conference “unless they repent and seek forgiveness of their brethren” (A. Cannon, 12 Dec. 1895). At a meeting on 23 January, Brigham Young, Jr., Heber J.

Grant, and Francis M. Lyman were appointed to attend to the case of Roberts for standing out against the other Church authorities, with Thatcher's case to be taken up "when the time came" — that is, when his health improved (Young, 23 Jan. 1896).

Early in 1896 differing opinions prevailed about the best way to approach the Thatcher case. George Q. Cannon conceded that his longtime opponent was in poor spiritual condition but did not think there was any danger in leaving him alone for the present. Apostle Young expressed a well-conceived dissent, arguing that according to the eternal scheme of justice and mercy it was not merciful to leave Thatcher alone when he might die out of harmony with his brethren. Justice had first to be satisfied by disciplining Thatcher for his stubbornness, after which mercy could be exercised. Young did not wish the physically spent apostle to lose what might be his only chance for reconciliation by waiting until he had completely recovered — if he did.

Yet despite this, little was done in actual contact with Thatcher. Several apostles visited Thatcher informally in Logan and there was considerable fasting and prayer in his behalf. When Heber J. Grant visited him on 14 March, he described Thatcher as "very low indeed" and feeling it would be "a great blessing from the Lord if he could be layed to rest."

Meanwhile, B. H. Roberts had stubbornly refused to concede any error in his past actions and had been relieved of his Church office for three weeks with the understanding that the separation would become permanent if he did not change. Finally on 13 March he had submitted to the judgment of his brethren, amid great rejoicing and many tears (Grant, 12–13 March 1896). Later Thatcher would critically contrast the relative energy expended (Reasoner, Dec. 1896, 112), but it is clear the other General Authorities were limiting time spent with him then out of consideration for his condition.

April conference was approaching. While Thatcher's problems remained unresolved, the other General Authorities did not feel justified in presenting his name to be sustained, but emotional confrontations would further jeopardize his physical well-being. At the 31 March Quorum meeting most of the apostles expressed their still divided views regarding Thatcher. John Henry Smith cautioned that visits should be made during the mornings since Thatcher was taking morphine later in the day and evenings for the pain (Grant, 31 March 1896). Next day Lorenzo Snow found Thatcher too feeble to talk very long but was sure he was improving (Grant, 1 April 1896).

Some have supposed that the opiates explain Thatcher's pattern of submissiveness followed by defiance (Godfrey 1979). Although drug dependency may well have influenced this pattern, more likely Thatcher simply found the pressure of the group gatherings too great to withstand comfortably and thus he voiced conformity but later, away from his quorum members, would violate what others considered clear-cut promises and commitments.

As conference drew nearer, some General Authorities decided it was necessary to draft a "political manifesto," or declaration of rights and wrongs relating to church discipline. It stated that every leading official of the Church, "before accepting any position, political or otherwise, which would interfere

with the proper and complete discharge of his ecclesiastical duties . . . should apply to the proper authorities and learn from them whether he can, consistently with the obligations already entered into with the church upon assuming his office take upon himself the added duties and labors and responsibilities of the new position" (Roberts 6:334–36). There must have been considerable certainty that Moses Thatcher, who had consistently opposed just such political restrictions, would not accept it, but Apostles Young and Snow were delegated to submit it to him nevertheless. They went to his newly acquired residence across from Temple Square late in the morning of April 5. He requested permission to keep the document for several hours for examination but then returned it unsigned saying that he "could not coincide with the whole doctrine" but hoped perhaps he might "see it" when his health returned (Young, 5 April 1896). The entire body of Church leaders was perplexed that Thatcher would not rely on the collective judgment of the other General Authorities who had unanimously approved and signed the manifesto. That very afternoon, the document was read and unanimously accepted by the conference, as was the list of Church authorities — Moses Thatcher not included.

Thatcher later stated he had no intimation that he would be treated so harshly for not signing the manifesto (Reasoner, Dec. 1896, 33). John Henry Smith later observed that, except for his health, "within three days after Brother Thatcher declined to sustain his associates, he would have been dealt with for his fellowship and standing in the Council of the Apostles" (Reasoner, December 1896, 23). Thatcher's illness could have limited his knowledge of the current situation, but he must have known of B. H. Roberts's situation just the month previous. In light of his history of troubled relations with his colleagues, Thatcher's subsequent claim that he knew no Church leaders who "held aught" against him is evidence of either poor memory or a slipping hold on reality.

Public reaction to the omission of Thatcher's name was not unanimously favorable. Many felt that the partially deposed apostle was being unduly pressured during illness. Sensitive to such allegations but convinced their course was correct, the Quorum of the Twelve met 28 May 1896 to discuss Thatcher's case. Grant's summary notes that Thatcher had continued to criticize George Q. Cannon over the long past Bullion Beck mine case. His health had improved sufficiently that he was attending to business and other affairs near Logan.

Joseph F. Smith wanted an ultimatum. The Quorum should "insist upon his harmonizing himself with his brethren, or then he should be disfellowshipped from the quorum." President Woodruff observed that in Thatcher's present state of mind, "the devil has a very strong advocate," reminded the Twelve that dealing with the case was their responsibility, and charged them to take such action as was necessary (Grant, 28 May 1896).

The apostles decided to resolve the matter at once even though John Henry Smith reported that a Logan physician had informed him Thatcher had become "addicted to the use of morphine" and therefore did not think they should "hurry matters." His brother-in-law was "hardly a responsible man."

Heber J. Grant retorted that Thatcher's position "since he commenced using morphine was in perfect harmony with that which he occupied a number of years prior to becoming addicted to this habit." Others agreed. The consensus was to have the council "labor with Apostle Moses Thatcher and learn if he is with us or against us" (Grant, 28 May 1896).

Apparently a communication was sent immediately because Thatcher replied to Lorenzo Snow and Brigham Young, Jr., that he planned to meet with his fellow apostles at the temple annex on 4 June. Young was particularly encouraged at the willingness of his brother to meet for what was expected to be a plain talk "in relation to his rebellion against the church" (Young, 4 June 1896). But on the designated day the apostles learned that Thatcher had suffered a particularly serious relapse, a potentially fatal one unless he would agree to be hospitalized.

This relapse postponed the question until the regular quarterly meeting on 8 July. Most of those present expressed the feeling that immediate and decisive action need be taken on the matter. A sentiment was growing among young Church political activists like attorney James H. Moyle that the apostles were wrong and that Thatcher would be vindicated. Democratic writer Calvin Reasoner's booklet, "Moses Thatcher Memorial Presented by his Friends As a Testimonial in Behalf of Civil and Religious Liberty," had come out in June and kept the controversy hot. John W. Taylor was particularly upset and, according to Grant's journal, designated Thatcher "the leader of all the dissenters in the church," and "one of the worst enemies the church has," "in harmony" with men who would "gladly destroy the Church of God" (Grant, 9 July 1896). President Woodruff felt that the longer they left the case without some action, the worse condition it would be in. Franklin D. Richards and Brigham Young, Jr., were appointed to call on Thatcher and learn the state of his feelings.

The two apostles found Thatcher just embarking for Saltaire resort to bathe in Great Salt Lake. During a twenty-minute conversation, they determined no change in his views on the political manifesto. When Young commented, "Why we have believed those principles all our lives," Thatcher replied, "There are things in that document I never did believe in" and announced his intention to defend his position before the Quorum by drawing on the Doctrine and Covenants. Young reported this conversation to the Quorum and moved that Thatcher "be dropped from his apostleship" (Young, 9 July 1896). But at the suggestion of F. M. Lyman, they decided to give Thatcher another two weeks to appear before his quorum and "answer to the charge of apostacy" (Young, 9 July 1896). When the designated time arrived, the apostles were in considerable turmoil because of the short and fatal illness of their popular fellow apostle, Abraham H. Cannon, and the Thatcher case was again postponed (Richards, 19 July 1896). Apparently, too, Thatcher was noncommittal about meeting the Quorum and the summons was indefinite.

Also, some of Thatcher's family had requested a postponement while Thatcher attempted to break his morphine habit. On 16 July John Henry Smith noted that up to the previous evening Thatcher had been over 120 hours

without taking any of the narcotic. He had attended Cannon's funeral on 26 July but afterwards his demands for morphine alarmed the family. Their efforts to keep morphine from him "had greatly agitated him." In desperation, concerned friends and family had gathered to discuss forcibly hospitalizing him. Moses Thatcher, Jr., conceded that part of the time Thatcher was insane because of his addiction, and other close associates concurred (J. H. Smith, 16, 26 July 1896).

While Wilford Woodruff and George Q. Cannon vacationed in California, recovering from the shock of Abram Cannon's sudden death, matters related to Thatcher remained unresolved. Finally, on 17 September 1896, the First Presidency and remaining Quorum members met and took up his case. Young's journal account expresses exhausted patience. The Twelve could "stand his conduct no longer" and his health allowed him to "go anywhere he likes" and continue his opposition. Young himself observed that Thatcher had not attempted to meet with his quorum and feared that he had "passed beyond the influence of his leaders." Young went to Cache Valley to investigate and reported on 24 September that Thatcher, according to Thatcher's brother-in-law, William B. Preston and son, Moses Jr., was in the twenty-seventh day of a sixty-day treatment from the then-popular Keely Institute. According to Franklin D. Richards's journal, Church leaders willingly agreed to let the treatment continue without interruption.

However, at October conference two weeks later, the problem resurfaced. John Henry Smith noted in his journal 5 October that the General Authorities "talked over Bro. M. Thatcher's case" at a council meeting between the morning and afternoon sessions, probably in response to persistent questions. President Woodruff concluded to "make a statement," as did also Snow, J. H. Smith, Young, Grant, Teasdale, and Joseph F. Smith (see text in Penrose 1896, 2-18; Reasoner, Dec. 1896). President Woodruff explained why Moses Thatcher's name was again not read for a sustaining vote: he "had not been with his quorum in spirit for years." Woodruff may have differentiated between these comments and more direct personal dealings with Thatcher for his past offenses, but Thatcher expressed surprise and dismay at these strong public comments. He and his family felt a promise had been broken.

On 14 October Thatcher met Franklin D. Richards and told him he planned to call on President Woodruff, then meet with the apostles in their regular council the following day. When he appeared at the entrance to the Salt Lake Temple, he was denied admittance upon the specific instructions of the First Presidency. Already convened, the First Presidency and Twelve had unanimously concluded that they could not in good conscience admit him into the sanctuary. In the same meeting, they drafted an announcement that Thatcher was suspended from all Church duties and priesthood functions (Young and Richards, 15 Oct. 1896). Apparently Richards had not communicated effectively between Thatcher and the First Presidency and this was the final breach.

The meeting might have been held in another location, but Church leaders had no real desire left for reconciliation. In subsequent weeks, President

Lorenzo Snow exchanged several letters with Thatcher in an attempt to resolve the matter, but Thatcher declined to meet with the Quorum at all and sought to make his defense at a public hearing. Snow refused to countenance such a proceeding and warned that because of unreconciled past actions, several of Thatcher's fellow apostles did not feel they could fellowship him unless amends were promptly made. When Thatcher persisted in his contentions, Snow confessed to the other apostles that he had very little faith in Thatcher's sincerity "as the spirit of technicality was plainly manifest in all his correspondence" (Reasoner, Dec. 1896, 22-33).

After being summoned to meet the Twelve on 12 November, Thatcher sent a lengthy letter justifying his position and informing his brethren that they need not convene in his behalf. The apostles renewed the summons for 19 November. When he did not appear, it was unanimously concluded that he be "dropped from this quorum and prevented from every function of the Priesthood" (Young, 19 Nov. 1896). Young's journal for 22 November added that Woodruff commended the Quorum's action as being needed for a long time. Next day a notice was published in the *Deseret News* that Thatcher had been "severed from the Council of Twelve Apostles and . . . deprived of his Apostleship and other offices in the Priesthood."³

Thus the rupture was complete. Certainly there was blame enough for both sides. The Church hierarchy had failed to communicate effectively at several crucial points in the conflict, but the larger measure of responsibility most definitely rests on Moses Thatcher. Admittedly he was standing firmly for fundamental principles of American political liberty, but he had previously covenanted first loyalty to upbuilding the Kingdom of God. His long series of abrasive encounters had eroded the tolerance of his colleagues. His stubbornness, along with a clearly apparent air of aloofness and superiority, also weighed heavily in the final balance.

In an extensive series of comments and recollections expressed repeatedly during the fall of 1896, Church leaders, whether in justification or explanation, became more public about Thatcher's offenses. In an anonymous pamphlet authored by Charles W. Penrose (1896), President Wilford Woodruff stated that "ever since the death of President John Taylor, Brother Moses Thatcher had been influenced by an apostate spirit." It had taken Thatcher "about a week to confess [George Q.] Cannon's sins for him, without making any confession whatever for his own; recalling that Cannon at the time had possessed a righteous and forgiving spirit," while Thatcher's spirit had been "of the evil one." Furthermore, Thatcher had been similarly inclined "more or less ever since." One of Woodruff's most telling indictments was that "Thatcher undertook to control the apostles and run things generally and was

³ Young, 12 Nov. 1896 quotes Woodruff that Thatcher "would not yield to his brethren." Young concluded "now it looks like he was giving his apostleship for a bare chance of getting into the U.S. Senate." *Salt Lake Tribune*, 15 Nov. 1896, had contained an interview with Thatcher. Asked whether he was again a candidate for the U.S. Senate, he had replied that he was not, but added defiantly that he would accept the nomination if his election would vindicate the principles for which he had contended and help prevent "the forging of chain's upon the people of Utah."

able for a while to influence two or three of the twelve." Heber J. Grant confessed that he had at one time been "led by Brother Thatcher into a wrong spirit" and that the late Erastus Snow, who himself had previously been similarly inclined, "emphatically warned Moses Thatcher and [Apostle Grant] that unless they repented the spirit they were of would lead them away from the quorum of the apostles." Grant testified that from then on he had avoided Thatcher's critical influence (In Penrose 1896).

Lorenzo Snow concurred that Thatcher's trouble had arisen as a consequence of "his spirit and conduct towards Brother Cannon," adding that Thatcher's course in the "Bullion-Beck business ought to be fully exposed." In a public statement published 1 December in the *Salt Lake Herald*, the Quorum president succinctly summarized the many points when he observed, "Moses Thatcher was entirely out of harmony with his brethren the apostles. . . . The disaffection of Moses Thatcher dates back a long time before political difficulties could enter into the matter." Besides the false predictions of "a man like unto Moses," the Bullion Beck matter, and Thatcher's political activities, Snow also stated that he had "neglected the meetings of his quorum for years," even when his health would have permitted him to be present (in Penrose 1896, 6-10, 20-27).

President Snow in a 30 November letter published in December, added information never previously recorded. When Wilford Woodruff acceded to the presidency, Thatcher's opinion had placed "human smartness and business ability as above that simplicity of character and susceptibility to divine impressions" notable in Woodruff and objected that such a man could not grasp the situation or cope with the difficulties (Penrose 1896, 25). Overruled, he persisted in his views. Snow added personal impressions, concluding that Thatcher's "bearing with his brethren of the twelve was such that he could not brook dissent and resented their non-acceptance of his personal views" (Snow 1896). Francis M. Gibbons, presently secretary to the First Presidency, recently offered a similar insight possibly based on source material not available to other scholars. Thatcher "began to make unfavorable comparisons between himself and those senior to him in the highest circles of church leadership. This was the seed that, once having taken root, grew and spread until it distorted his judgement. He honestly felt that he was right and his less richly endowed brethren were wrong. And so it was that his personal qualities of brilliance and self-confidence fired both Moses Thatcher's spectacular rise and his dramatic, tragic fall" (1979, 107).

On one occasion in the Thatcher controversy, Brigham Young quoted President Wilford Woodruff as explaining the offending party had "sought to rule over his brethren" (13 April 1896). Other apostles agreed that Thatcher had attempted to impose his wishes and ideas upon his fellows in an arbitrary and dictatorial manner. Thatcher had written Lorenzo Snow 18 November: "Only let me remind you, brethren, of how the Lord has required us to use the priesthood — persuasion, gentleness, brotherly kindness, patience, love" (Reasoner, Dec. 1896, 32). Ironically, they accused him of attempting to "exercise unrighteous dominion" upon them.

In the decade during which he had presided over the Quorum of the Twelve, Lorenzo Snow's most concerted effort had been to attain the harmony both the New Testament and Doctrine and Covenants stressed were essential among God's chosen servants. The wonder is not that men such as Snow resented Moses Thatcher's behavior and attitudes but that they tolerated it for so long without taking decisive action.

Public reaction to Thatcher's dismissal was clearly mixed. Many who understood principles of Church discipline accepted the decision as the only one possible. But the steady barrage of newspaper articles — the *Salt Lake Tribune* was especially hostile — and other publications placed Church leaders on the defensive (Scrapbook; Penrose 1896; Nelson 1897). Despite their own recent statements claiming no interest in dominating Utah politics, General Authorities were particularly alarmed by Latter-day Saints' resistance to political guidance. On 5 November 1896, Grant quoted George Q. Cannon as saying "there was a wonderful disrespect for the Priesthood of God being manifested among many of the Saints, and that he felt if this was not repented of it would lead to serious consequences."

Thatcher added further fuel to this conflagration by releasing his correspondence with Lorenzo Snow for publication in the *Salt Lake Tribune*. Church insiders felt the betrayal keenly. Brigham Young, Jr., confided to his journal on 1 December that Thatcher should be tried for his church membership. No action was taken since Thatcher again entered the campaign for United States Senator.

Anything done during his candidacy would again create accusations of Church interference in politics. Nevertheless, Brigham Young, Jr., could not completely restrain himself. As the state legislature deadlocked on the senatorial question, he met 20 January with a Provo representative at the Rickets business building in Salt Lake City. A long-time opponent spotted him and the *Tribune* next morning alleged, not inaccurately, that Young was "influencing the legislature against Thatcher." After fifty-three ballots, Joseph L. Rawlins, who though the son of an LDS bishop considered himself a non-Mormon, defeated Thatcher thirty-two to twenty-nine. There was no question about which candidate the Church authorities preferred, and Grant's journal entry for 25 January indicates that he too was actively lobbying against Thatcher with legislators.

On 18 February, Brigham Young, Francis M. Lyman, and Heber J. Grant were reappointed to bring a complaint of apostacy against Thatcher before the Salt Lake Stake High Council. Young gathered evidence in Logan and Stake President Angus M. Cannon was pressed to set a date for the trial before April conference.

For reasons that are not clear, the case was delayed until 6 August. The proceedings took place in Brigham Young's schoolhouse inside the Eagle Gate (Journal History, 6–14 Aug. 1897). After a week of extensive testimony, Thatcher spoke in his own behalf with marked humility and submissiveness. Where he had earlier been very defensive, he now said that his "dearest hope and ambition for the future was to serve God as a member of the church"

and that “fellowship in the church was to him worth all else on earth.” He explained his past actions: “Sometimes men are [too] blind to see, too deaf to hear and with hearts too hard to receive instructions.” Admitting that he had been “wrong in many things” . . . he saw no reason now why he should not sustain the Declaration of Principles” or political manifesto, and that he could withstand any negative reaction from “the world” without humiliation. He thanked his brethren for their patience and kindness and declared he was prepared to do whatever they required of him.

The court’s decision was that to retain his standing and fellowship in the Church he must publish a statement that the stake presidency found satisfactory. On 14 August 1897, Thatcher met with the presidency and formally accepted the verdict. He also submitted a declaration which they agreed complied with the demands of the high council. Although recrimination continued in the opposition press and political circles and further bitterness at times reappeared, particularly during subsequent senatorial elections, the Moses Thatcher case was finally concluded.

Thatcher’s remaining years were quiet. He and his family were convinced he had been treated unfairly, but he made no bitterness public (Ivins 1950s). In 1904, Thatcher was subpoenaed to testify at the Reed Smoot hearings, where several senators questioned him about the Mormon leaders’ attempts to control politics. In his extensive comments, he fully conceded the hierarchy’s right to restrict the political activities of General Authorities but argued that there had been no attempt to interfere with the political rights of lay members. He affirmed the value he placed on his membership and otherwise demonstrated impressive loyalty to those who had felt constrained to treat him with considerable harshness (Senate 1:1012–50).

Moses Thatcher lived five more years. Upon his passing 2 August 1909, the *Deseret News* obituary commented that he had been a great man, who had given his time to the Church until recent years. It did not mention that he had been an apostle nor why his Church service had changed. The funeral, held at the Logan Tabernacle, was attended by an overflow crowd. General Authorities B. H. Roberts and John Henry Smith, who had once been close to Thatcher, but whom he had subsequently denounced rather strongly, were assigned to speak at the services. Both elaborated at length on his good qualities and great service Thatcher had once done to his church and his Lord.

The Thatcher case is a painful episode in Church history — painful to him and his family, painful to his associates, and disruptive in the way that any major internal dislocation damages the fabric of an institution. It is not, however, the tragedy of an independent mind crushed by arbitrary rule or of free agency violated by unrighteous dominion. Thatcher’s physical illness, his history of vacillation and recalcitrance, and the Quorum’s own record of forbearance do not allow such an appealing but oversimplified assessment. Certainly there are grounds for criticism in how the Church hierarchy handled the case, particularly toward the end, but its longsuffering and patience must also be acknowledged.

It is indeed a tragedy for a man with the seeds of real greatness in his chosen field not to develop the humility and cooperation with colleagues and

higher authority that are necessary for retaining a position appropriate to his talents. *That* is the tragedy of Moses Thatcher.

REFERENCES

Note: LDS Church Archives refers to Historical Department Archives of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, Salt Lake City, Utah. Unless otherwise noted, all correspondence is in the papers of the recipient.

- Beck Notes. Statement of John Beck's notes. First Presidency Financial Papers. LDS Church Archives.
- Beck, John. Papers. LDS Church Archives. They include the Articles of Agreement, 11 June 1883, signed by John Beck, John Taylor, and George Q. Cannon witnessed by George Reynolds and Joseph F. Smith; Legal transfer agreement dated 2 July 1887, first-signed by John Taylor and witnessed by L. John Nuttall and Charles H. Wilken, second-signed by George Q. Cannon.
- Cannon, Abraham H. Journal. Harold B. Lee Library, Brigham Young University, Provo, Utah.
- Card, Charles O. Papers. LDS Church Archives.
- Gibbons, Francis M. *Heber J. Grant: Man of Steel, Prophet of God*. Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1979.
- Godfrey, Kenneth W. "Was There More to the Moses Thatcher Case than Politics?" Paper delivered at Ogden and Logan, Nov. 1979; photocopy in my possession. Audience comments during the November reading in Ogden added biographical comments on the matter of Thatcher's drug dependency.
- Grant, Heber J. Journal. LDS Church Archives.
- Invs, Stanley S. "A Constitution for Utah." *Utah Historical Quarterly* 25 (April 1957): 100-16.
- . *The Moses Thatcher Case*. Undated, probably 1950s. Salt Lake City: Modern Microfilm Company, no date.
- Jenson, Andrew, ed. *The Historical Record: Church Encyclopedia Book 1*. 4 vols. Salt Lake City: no pub., 1889.
- Journal History of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. Microfilm. LDS Church Archives.
- Lund, Anthon H. Diary. LDS Church Archives.
- Lyman, Edward Leo. "The Mormon Quest for Utah Statehood." Ph.D. diss., University of California, Riverside, 1981.
- Lyman, Francis M. Journal. LDS Church Archives.
- Merrill, Melvin Clarence, ed. *Utah Pioneer and Apostle: Marriner Wood Merrill and His Family*. N.p., 1937.
- Nelson, N. L. "An Open Letter to Hon. Moses Thatcher." 16 Feb. 1897. Pamphlet. Nelson was a BYU professor.
- Penrose, Charles W. "The Thatcher Episode: A Concise Statement in the Case." Salt Lake City; Deseret News Publishing Company, Dec. 1896.
- Reasoner, Calvin. "Church and State: The Issue of Civil and Religious Liberty in Utah." Salt Lake City: Juvenile Instructor Press, Dec. 1896. This pamphlet contains numerous documents including a letter from Thatcher to Lorenzo Snow 16 Oct. 1896, a 5 October 1896 speech by John Henry Smith, and a letter from Lorenzo Snow to six young Mormon businessmen: Nephi L. Morris, Arnold G. Giaque, Arthur F. Barnes, R. C. Badger, and T. A. Clawson, 30 Nov. 1896.
- . "Moses Thatcher Memorial presented by His Friends as a Testimonial in behalf of Civil and Religious Liberty." Salt Lake City, July 1896.

- Richards, Franklin D. Journal. LDS Church Archives.
- Roberts, B. H. 6 vols. *A Comprehensive History of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints*. Salt Lake City: Deseret News Press, 1930.
- Scrapbook: Moses Thatcher Press Clipping Scrapbook. Moses Thatcher Family Papers. Utah State University Library, Logan, Utah.
- Senate. *Proceedings before the Committee on Privileges and Elections*. 4 vols. Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1904.
- Smith, John Henry. Journal. Marriott Library, University of Utah, Salt Lake City.
- Smith, Joseph F. Letterbooks. LDS Church Archives.
- Stock Controversy. Folder in First Presidency Files labeled Thatcher Controversy over Stock, LDS Church Archives.
- Tullidge, Edward W. *Tullidge's Histories, Containing the History of All the Northern, Eastern, and Western Counties of Utah, Also the Counties of Southern Idaho, with a Biographical Appendix*. Salt Lake City: Juvenile Instructor Press, 1889.
- Utah Politics. File containing Reports from Committees. LDS Church Archives.
- Woodruff, Wilford. Journal. LDS Church Archives; Typescript, 9 vols. ed. Scott G. Kenney. Midvale, Utah: Signature Books, 1983-85.
- . Papers. LDS Church Archives. The letter from Parkinson was, according to F. D. Richards' journal, received on 30 March 1893.
- . to Moses Thatcher, 31 March 1893. Letterbooks. LDS Church Archives.
- Young, Brigham, Jr. Journal. LDS Church Archives.