

“All Alone and None to Cheer Me”: The Southern States Mission Diaries of J. Golden Kimball

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IF YOU HAD BEEN A GUEST in Chattanooga's Florentine Hotel on the evening of 14 April 1883, your sleep might have been disturbed, particularly if your room were near one of those occupied by the twenty-four Mormon elders who had arrived that night by train from Salt Lake City. Included in the group from Utah, Idaho, and Arizona was an angular twenty-nine-year-old by the name of Jonathan Golden Kimball, who ran up and down the halls of the hotel telling the other elders “to blow off the gas,” his blunt but jocular way of advising them to put out their lights and get enough sleep for the next day's activities.¹

At the beginning of his mission, J. Golden Kimball was probably feeling a combination of homesickness, apprehension, and excitement. The journey that had brought him to Chattanooga and the Southern States Mission was a long and circuitous one, both geographically and otherwise. Born 9 June 1853, the oldest surviving child of Heber C. and Christeen Golden Kimball, J. Golden enjoyed in many ways a privileged childhood. He attended school in Salt Lake City and received a scholarship to the University of Deseret in 1867. His father, one of Brigham Young's closest associates, also trained J. Golden to act as his private secretary and often took him on Church-related trips. This rather idyllic existence ended suddenly when Heber Kimball died in

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¹ J. Golden Kimball Diary, vol. 1, p. 22. With the exception of the addition of some punctuation marks, I will quote entries from Kimball's diaries just as he wrote them, including occasional misspellings.

June 1868, shortly after J. Golden's fifteenth birthday (Jenson 1971, 1:210; Richards 1966, 19-21).

Difficult years followed. Over his mother's objections, J. Golden left school and began working as a teamster, hauling freight in the Salt Lake City area. Eventually he was able to establish his own hauling and freighting business; but despite long hours of labor and his mother's earnings as a seamstress, their small family lived an impoverished existence at best. Despairing of improving their plight in Salt Lake City, J. Golden, his mother, his brother Elias, and sister Mary Margaret in 1875 purchased from two of Heber C. Kimball's sons, Isaac and Solomon Kimball, squatters claims to four hundred acres near Meadowville in Rich County, about one hundred miles northeast of Salt Lake City. For the next fifteen years, Golden and Elias raised horses and cattle on this land (Jenson 1971, 1:210; Richards 1966, 23-26).

Again, life was not easy. The family lived in a rude 16-by-20-foot cabin. Mother, daughter, and sons all worked long, strenuous days beginning before daylight and extending into the darkness. To Golden their time in Rich County was "a fight for life"; on at least one occasion, the family was able to eat only by borrowing a sack of flour from Bishop Ira Nebeker (Richards 1966, 26-28).

Golden also remembered the early years in Rich County as a time with few restraints beyond his mother's somewhat lenient influence. While he did nothing criminal, he avoided church; and like many a wayward young man, his youth and spirit led him into numerous activities which he later regretted (Richards 1966, 28-29).

A degree of discipline returned to his life in the summer of 1881 when Karl G. Maeser, principal of Brigham Young Academy in Provo, spoke at a Meadowville meeting on behalf of the Church and his school. Golden and Elias were among the few who attended, and Maeser's powerful, persuasive words struck a responsive chord in both. Suddenly desiring more out of life than ranching, the two brothers struggled to raise enough funds for their tuition. After many months, they had secured at least part of the money needed to enroll at the academy. They attended the Provo school from 1881 to 1883, and though neither graduated, their two years there seem to have broadened and enlightened both of them (Richards 1966, 35-39; Jenson 1971, 1:211).

Golden's call to missionary service was unexpected and abrupt. On 3 April 1883, shortly after finishing the academic year at BYA, family financial affairs brought him to the office of Church President John Taylor. There he was informed that he had been called to serve in the Southern States Mission and that he should be ready to depart

in one week. As he learned later, his name had been crossed off the list of potential missionaries two years earlier because of his use of profanity. Apparently his recent efforts to improve himself had convinced Church authorities that he was now worthy to serve in the mission field. Thus on 10 April 1883, his preparations hastily completed, J. Golden boarded a train at 1:00 P.M. in Salt Lake City and with twenty-three other elders began the long ride to the mission headquarters in Chattanooga (Kimball 1:1-7; MH 9, 11 April 1883).

Dozens of nineteenth-century diaries kept by missionaries who served in the Southern States Mission are now available to researchers in the Church archives in Salt Lake City. Unfortunately, many of them are—to borrow a phrase from Heber Kimball's biographer, Stanley Kimball—"disappointingly routine"—little more than skeletal narratives of the number of miles walked, meetings held, and tracts distributed. J. Golden's five-volume diary is an exception.² His somewhat sporadic formal education notwithstanding, Kimball was a man of keen intelligence, insight, and sensitivity. His recorded words, containing little of the strong language for which he became known and sections of intriguingly cryptic narrative, provide a generally excellent description of the life of a traveling elder of that day in the South.

Kimball's call to labor in the Southern States Mission came at a crucial time for both his church and the South. In Utah the 1863 discovery of valuable minerals southwest of the Salt Lake Valley, coupled with the completion of the transcontinental railroad line in 1869, contributed to an economic boom. New economic opportunities brought non-Mormon workers into the territory. Though these newcomers comprised probably no more than 10 percent of Utah's population, they vocally opposed Mormon political control of the territory. As early as 1870, some formed the Liberal Party to contest territorial elections. Constantly outvoted, they repeatedly challenged the election of the territory's congressional delegate. Their protests to Congress helped keep the "Mormon problem" before the nation. To their complaints were added the lamentations of many of the Protestant ministers who led the approximately 14,000 non-Mormons settled in the Utah territory by the mid-1870s. Some sent pleas to the East for teachers, money, and other forms of public support. Finally, the Godbeite movement, made up of William S. Godbe and his followers who harshly criticized the leadership of Brigham Young, complicated territorial matters further. Although this movement, made up of disaffected Mormon businessmen and intellectuals, soon floundered, its publication, *Utah*

² There are actually six volumes in the Kimball collection, but the sixth volume deals with events in Utah after Kimball returned from the South.

Magazine, continued later as the Salt Lake *Daily Tribune* and became the main outlet for the territory's non-Mormon population.

Congress responded to the attacks against the Saints with a flood of anti-Mormon legislation, beginning with Ohio Senator Benjamin Wade's bill of 1866 which, among other provisions, would have eliminated Mormon control over the territorial probate courts and prohibited marriage ceremonies by Mormon religious officials. The proposal did not pass, but others that followed did. The Poland Act of 1874 extended federal judicial control over all criminal, civil, and chancery cases and placed the territory's attorney general and marshal under federal direction. The Edmunds Act of 1882 declared polygamy to be a felony, disfranchised polygamists, barred them from holding public office and serving on juries, and placed territorial elections under the control of a presidential commission. During this crucial period, Brigham Young died in 1877 of complications from a ruptured appendix. As historians Leonard Arrington and Davis Bitton have pointed out, Young's successor, John Taylor, was a man of considerable ability; but the death of the man who had led the Church for over thirty years was a huge loss to the Saints in the midst of such an embittered anti-Mormon crusade (1980, 173-80).

If J. Golden left the Utah territory in turmoil, then he entered a region in little better condition. Indeed the situation was worse for Latter-day Saints, who made up only a minute fraction of the South's population. Having recently used intimidation, chicanery, and violence to overthrow radical Republican rule, the Redeemers—that strange alliance of southern Democrats and Whigs—were determined to maintain their political control over the region and did not hesitate to use these same methods in the post-Reconstruction era (Woodward 1966, 1-22, 51-57). This proclivity toward extralegal means carried over into the realm of the spirit. Many Southerners were as intolerant of spiritual carpetbaggers as they had been of political ones during the postwar period, particularly those they suspected were trying to lure the flower of southern womanhood into the harems of lecherous Mormon patriarchs. Elder Joseph Standing had already been murdered in Georgia in 1879, and troubles would intensify during J. Golden Kimball's mission.

The trip to Chattanooga was largely, though not entirely, routine. As the train crossed the seemingly endless plains of Kansas, J. Golden found the mountainless landscape strange. At Kansas City the elders got off the train and, according to Golden, "we were all collected together like a herd of sheep protecting themselves from the wolves. . . . You could see ridicule on all of [the onlookers] faces." Later that same day, he overheard two men denouncing polygamy as a blot on the

nation, agreeing that the Mormons should be exterminated. Golden flushed with anger at these words. "My blood ran cold," he wrote, "but I had to be a silent listener" (Kimball 1:12-15).

From Kansas City, the missionaries traveled to St. Louis, Cincinnati, and finally southward through Kentucky. During the last leg of the trip, Golden recorded his first impressions of the South and its people. Northern Kentucky's well-groomed towns and beautiful homes delighted him, but he was not impressed with the rocky, hilly landscape in the southern part of the state. He found the Kentuckians he encountered even less attractive. Most who boarded the train seemed to be loggers, and many of these were "drunk, ragged and ignorant." Finally at 10:30 P.M. on 14 April the missionaries reached Chattanooga; and despite the long journey, J. Golden was soon making his self-appointed rounds in the corridors of the Florentine Hotel (Kimball 1:15, 20-22).

The following day, Golden visited popular points of interest in the city, especially Lookout Mountain and the adjacent Civil War battlefields. He also listened to a black Baptist minister preaching to a congregation of about three hundred other blacks and some curious white onlookers, at least one of whom was uproariously drunk. At the end of the service, in a rare demonstration of racial and spiritual unity, the minister baptized "one white woman and two darkies." Around 4:00 P.M. the new elders returned to the Florentine where B. H. Roberts, the assistant mission president, gave them their assignments.³

Golden was assigned to the Virginia Conference. On Tuesday, 17 April, he and his first companion, Landon J. Rich of Paris, Idaho, left by train for the extreme southwestern section of Virginia, a pocket of Appalachia first visited by Mormon elders in the late 1830s. Here among poor folk who eked out a living from coal mines and from small farms clinging to the mountainsides, J. Golden Kimball's mission activities in the South began, and his earliest experiences set the tone for much that followed (Kimball 1:24-29; MH 11 April 1883; Sessions 1982, 16-31. See also Berrett 1960).

While his narrative is not entirely clear at this point, it appears that he and his companion stayed about three weeks with Mormon families in the area around Tazewell County, Virginia. Part of this time, the two practiced preaching to each other in the woods. Despite the friendly welcome from their new Virginia friends, Kimball soon tired of being a guest. He noted that one of their hosts, identified only

³ 1:22-24. The president of the Southern States Mission at this time was John Morgan, but because of his long service in the South and the pressure of family responsibilities in Utah, he made only occasional visits to the mission. Roberts handled the day-to-day affairs (Roberts, 56; Richardson 1965, 342).

as Aunt Pop, "talked till she fairly made my brain reel." And on 8 May, less than a month after his arrival, he noted simply, "The same old routine" (Kimball 1:29-42; Richards 1966, 48-49).

An unfortunate event occurred at this time which helped give birth to the often lurid rumors that dogged Mormon elders in the South. On 6 May a young girl about eight years old came to the door of a room in which Kimball was bathing. He told her to leave, but she later reported that he had tried to get her to come into the room. This episode cast a pall over Golden's missionary efforts before they had scarcely begun. "I felt sad," he wrote, "but could plainly see the devil had already commence of his warfare against me. It seems foolish for me to notice it; but things of this kind are soon circulated against a Mormon Elder" (1:41-42).

This early gloom eased somewhat on 9 May when Kimball was assigned a new companion, Newell A. Hill of Salt Lake City. The delight that this assignment elicited probably indicates that he and Hill had known each other before their missions. Together they were to labor in Giles, Pulaski, and Wythe counties in southwestern Virginia (Kimball 1:43).

On foot Kimball and Hill canvassed these counties and quickly found that the residents seemed to have no interest in religion. "You have to force it down them like stuffing a goose for baking," Kimball noted. The elders also discovered that indifference could turn quickly to hostility. During one of their first meetings, an angry Methodist minister came into the gathering and preached hotly about the Holy Ghost and spiritual authority, ending with a diatribe against polygamy. But J. Golden felt that, thanks to his companion, they came out on top in this exchange. "Newel wound him up like an eight day clock. Ignorant, O! my" (Kimball 1:46).

Some listeners were more likely to trick the missionaries than to denounce them. The day after their encounter with the Methodist minister, Kimball and Hill were approached by the minister's mother, "a poor old ignorant woman," who asked them to lay their hands on her to cure some unnamed illness. Sensing a trick, the elders replied that she must first accept the principles of their faith and be baptized. Signs, they said, come by faith, not faith by signs. After talking for about an hour and singing some hymns, her attitude toward them had changed considerably, but suddenly her "old man" appeared and threatened to whip her. With a pitiful look, the woman left. A tone of sadness again slipped into Kimball's narrative as he recorded, "God pity the poor souls. I wish I could save them all" (1:48-49).

For the next several weeks, Kimball and Hill walked across the Virginia countryside sharing their message with anyone who would

listen. Most remained largely indifferent, and Kimball noted that he felt friendless and “a wanderer in a strange land” (1:74).

It was not only the indifference of the people that brought on discouragement. The obligation imposed by the Church to travel without purse or scrip, which meant placing your faith in God and often asking total strangers for food and shelter, also caused problems. Fortunately for Kimball and his companions, their first area of Virginia had a scattering of Church members and a fairly substantial number of friends and sympathizers who could usually be counted on for the necessities. But as the elders made their rounds, Kimball sometimes sensed that the hospitality was beginning to wear a little thin in the families that had been visited repeatedly by traveling elders. He understood their feelings and hesitated to intrude. Yet he also realized that he had little choice except to continue to ask for help. He commented, “My sensitiveness has got to be blunted or it will cause me many unpleasant moments” (1:77–78).

He also found that his resolve needed strengthening. Their charge to travel without purse or scrip notwithstanding, many elders often carried a small amount of cash to meet incidental expenses and emergencies. When food and lodging were difficult to acquire, the missionaries sometimes yielded to the temptation to fall back on these resources. Kimball and Hill yielded in early July 1883, spending several nights in hotels around Newport, Virginia. While the food and lodging were apparently satisfactory, the experience was not. Clearly feeling some guilt over this lapse, Kimball wrote in mid-July that he intended henceforth to depend on God and not on money for his bread, butter, and lodging. Within days his determination was sorely tested. On 20 July 1883, he and Hill wandered from door to door until nine at night looking for food and lodging, receiving at every home “a frivolous excuse.” Hungry and weary, they finally settled on the bare ground, but the cool mountain air allowed them little rest. At eleven they got up and walked around to warm themselves, arose again at two, and finally got up for good around four. Despite the rigors of this experience and a few others like it, Kimball rarely used money again to pay for food and lodging (1:95–96, 108–9, 116–18).

A welcome respite from missionary labor came in August when Kimball and Hill met with the elders of the Virginia Conference at Burkes Garden, a tiny Tazewell County community nestled in the mountains of southwestern Virginia. A small Mormon congregation had been meeting there for over forty years. Missionaries looked forward to these conferences, annual affairs typically lasting two to three days and usually held out-of-doors on land owned by a Church member or friend. Elders renewed old friendships, made new acquaintances,

tances, shared experiences, and listened to sermons by representatives from the mission headquarters in Chattanooga. Usually the meetings were led by the president of the Southern States Mission, but this time they were under the direction of the assistant president, B. H. Roberts. Since his first meeting with Roberts during the trip from Salt Lake City to Chattanooga, Kimball had been favorably impressed, and his respect remained undiminished. He found Roberts kind and unassuming, and his two and one-quarter hour sermon at the conference was one of the most powerful Kimball had ever heard. Though Kimball said little in his diary about his own role in the conference, Roberts must have been similarly impressed with him as events would soon demonstrate.

After lingering in the Burkes Garden area for several days, Kimball resumed his mission work in the eastern counties of West Virginia with his new assigned companion, Charles A. Welch of Morgan, Utah (1:24, 136-48; MH 12 Aug. 1883). Their wandering took them north and then slightly west into Mercer County, West Virginia. Overnight lodging was still sometimes difficult to find, and the two spent at least one cold night in late August huddled in an unlocked church. The residents were fully as indifferent to spiritual matters as those in Virginia, and if anything, seemed to the elders even more ignorant and wicked (1:156-57).

Physical and emotional stress soon took its toll on J. Golden. By late August 1883, after only four months in the mission field, he was plagued by a variety of lingering physical ailments—a lame back that frequently made it difficult for him to walk, extreme fatigue, a persistent cold, and boils on various parts of his body.

Yet he never lost his keen insight and sense of humor. As he and Welch talked with a couple near Concord, West Virginia, one evening in early September 1883, the issue of polygamy came up. Kimball attempted to explain the difference between polygamists and adulterers and seducers. The man immediately saw the point and acknowledged it, but his wife was much less impressed. "The old lady had nothing to say," Golden recorded. He also began to note, as would many other elders in the South, the peculiarities of the rural southern speech. Near the end of the first volume of his diary, he recorded idioms that he found most interesting:

Right smart distance
 As certain as shooting
 No fat out of your gourd
 Kivering things up
 I felt worse than a yellow dog

Bob looked like a cut but tailed dog
 Bless God he has never been here since
 (1:157, 168-70, 180-81, 190)

Despite the lack of interest in their message, Kimball and Welch remained in West Virginia, slowly making their way northward into Summers and Greenbrier counties, westward into Fayette County, then gradually southward back toward Mercer County, West Virginia. They walked about twelve miles a day, sometimes preaching to small congregations in schoolhouses or churches but more often talking to family members gathered in the evening around their hearths (2:1-37).

The hospitality extended to the missionaries was sometimes strange. One man agreed to feed and house them for the night but would neither eat nor speak with them once they entered his house. On another occasion, they awoke to find that their host had left for the day and his wife now made no effort to conceal her hostility. She gave back the copy of Parley Pratt's *Voice of Warning* which the two elders had given them the night before and made it quite clear that they were not to return, ever. Kimball wrote: "We took the hurt and retired." Once they were informed that a certain woman wanted to see them, and they went to her house expecting a warm welcome. Instead she intended to give them a piece of her mind. Assuming "a theatrical position" at her front door, she quickly informed them that she had no use for adulterers and whoremongers. When they replied that Abraham had been polygamous, she retorted that God had nothing to do with that part of Abraham's life. Disappointed and disgusted, they left (2:14, 20-21).⁴

Finally, as they made their way southward one day in late October 1883, they requested a meal and a night's lodging after having been refused at two other places. The owner of the house told them they could stay but quickly added that he did not like Mormon preachers. Exhausted from the day's seventeen-mile walk and far less sensitive than a few weeks before, Kimball and his companion ignored the remark and entered the house. Once inside they endured several blasts against polygamy; but despite his sarcasm, their host gave them the best room in the house and "a splendid good supper" (22 Oct. 1883).

As Kimball made his way through the mountains of Virginia and West Virginia, he inevitably had some contact with black residents. Like most other missionary diaries of the period, Kimball's refers only occasionally and incidentally to black people, and the scarcity and

⁴ Kimball stopped numbering the pages of his diary after page 37 in Volume 2. Entries beyond that point will be cited by the date of entry.

condescending tone of these remarks indicate that conversion of blacks was not a matter of great concern for most elders in the South. After some early comments when he first reached Chattanooga from Utah, he did not again mention any blacks until late August when he and his companion stopped at "a negro's house" for a drink of water. Several weeks later he was offended when his host for the evening made him and Welch sleep upstairs with "two dirty black negroes." He remarked, "I hardly thought it was treating [us] with respect" (1:158; 2:31; 2 Nov. 1883). There is no indication in his diary that during these and other encounters he made any concerted effort to share the Mormon message with black people.

This is not surprising. Because of the great opposition which the Church already faced in the region, especially over polygamy, few wanted to add to their difficulties by challenging southern racial customs. Further, the common use of words such as "darkey" and "nigger" in missionary diaries indicates that Latter-day Saints were generally no more enlightened on racial matters than most other whites of their time.⁵

By late November 1883, Kimball and Welch had completed their circuit and were back among the Church members in Tazewell County, Virginia. For the first time in four weeks, they bathed and changed clothes, but cleanliness did not produce good health. J. Golden continued to be plagued by a severe cold and boils, as well as an infection in one of his legs that left him so lame he could hardly walk. But as Christmas approached, Kimball's leg improved, and he and Welch were reassigned to Amherst County, just north of Lynchburg. After spending a rather lonely Christmas with fellow Saints in Tazewell County, the two departed on 27 December, traveling by rail and by foot, reaching Amherst County on 30 December 1883 (24 Nov.; 4, 10, 11, 13, 21, 27, 28, 30 Dec. 1883).

Here they joined J. T. Heninger, the president of the Virginia Conference. The towns of the western Piedmont were little different from those they had already visited except they had better organized opposition. Mormon opponents were often either Dunkers (German

⁵ For examples of the use of these racial terms see the diaries and journals of Warren N. Dusenberry, John H. Gibbs, Martin Thomas, and Lucy Emily Woodruff in the LDS Historical Department Archives and the diaries and journals of Joseph E. Johnson, Joseph Morrell (including the collection of Joseph Morrell letters), and Andrew F. Smith at the Harold B. Lee Library at Brigham Young University. The majority of the Southern States Mission diaries and journals I examined make no mention at all of black people, reinforcing my contention that while blacks in the South sometimes responded to the Mormon message, their conversion was not a primary concern of missionaries in the region.

Baptists) or what Kimball called "Iron Side Baptists," apparently the "Hardshell" Baptists who opposed all missionary activities, Baptist included. Despite the antagonism of these two groups, the elders had occasional successes; shortly after their arrival, Kimball and Welch helped baptize one of Heiningers's converts, an unmarried woman named Mary Allen. Their first attempt to baptize her on 31 December miscarried, much to the delight of the non-Mormon onlookers, when Miss Allen's father appeared at the creek's edge and voiced his opposition. Trying to keep things in perspective, Kimball wrote on that day, "Priestcraft raged and devils howled but still the world turned on its axis." On 6 January 1884, her commitment renewed, Mary went through with the baptism after a hole was broken in the ice. But that was not the last that Kimball would hear of Mary Allen.

Several weeks of largely unsuccessful preaching followed. Neither Kimball nor Welch was able to speak with force or effectiveness, Kimball possibly because of his continuing health problems. On Sunday, 20 January 1884, both men tried to preach to a group of twenty non-Mormons. Nothing they said inspired anyone present, and Kimball admitted that when they finished not one word was said to them as their small congregation drifted away into the winter chill.⁶

In mid-February, however, he received news which lifted his sagging spirits. He noted in a 15 February diary entry that he had received a letter informing him that his half-brother Hyrum Kimball, who had been called in October 1883 to serve in the southern states, would soon join him. His companion for the past several months, Charles Welch, was to be transferred to Bath County, Virginia.

Hyrum arrived on 22 February, and until mid-April the two Kimballs walked the roads and trails of Amherst and neighboring Nelson County, sharing their message with all who would listen. J. Golden, the older and more experienced of the two, did most of the talking. However, the work did not get any easier. On 6 April, Kimball recorded that only two or three in his audience were listening and, not feeling well either physically or spiritually, he abruptly quit talking and sat down. The mean spirit that prevailed in the area did little to help his sensitive nature. He wrote that most residents believed Mormons could be killed and nothing would be done about it, a common sentiment in many areas of the South at that time (5 April).

⁶ In his candor, Kimball was probably more critical of himself at times than he should have been, for there were occasions when his words found their mark even though he was dissatisfied with his effort. For example, his diary entry on 20 February 1884 notes that he delivered some remarks, though he did not feel like talking, and afterwards "an infidel" in the audience told him, "You fired hot shell at us to night."

There were a few light and pleasant moments, however. In early April 1884, the Kimballs called at the home of a Mrs. Carr who had four or five daughters, one of whom caught J. Golden's eye. Estimating her weight to be 180 pounds, he pronounced her to be "a sample of perfect womanhood" and admired the spirited way she looked the elders squarely in the eye when expressing her views on "the great and important subject" of polygamy. In J. Golden's opinion, the missionaries more than adequately met the women's questions. "They can't withstand the Mormons," he wrote on 4 April. And at the end of the evening, he believed that the ladies' attitude toward them had improved considerably.

His work with Hyrum ended suddenly in mid-April 1884 when J. Golden was summoned to report to the mission headquarters in Chattanooga to work with the assistant president, B. H. Roberts. Though he had always admired Roberts, he did not want to leave Hyrum; and he "grumbled, kicked and felt grieved." But he soon calmed down and decided to go and do his best. With borrowed money, he purchased a train ticket, bid a sorrowful goodbye to Hyrum on 17 April, and two days later arrived in Chattanooga (14, 17-19 April 1884).

Kimball quickly became involved in the work of the mission headquarters, mostly handling mission correspondence and financial records. On 24 April he and Roberts met with a group of elders in Humphreys County, Tennessee, to organize the Northwest Tennessee Conference. Their train trip there took them through Nashville, which Kimball found to be the most beautiful city he had ever visited.

After the meetings, Roberts continued on to a meeting of the Middle Tennessee Conference, and Kimball started back to Chattanooga. During a lengthy layover alone in Nashville, Golden was overtaken by depression, a mood that reflects a dichotomy in his personality. On the one hand, he not only needed but cherished a certain amount of solitude. But given too much of it, he often became pensive, melancholy, and self-pitying. As he walked the streets of Nashville by himself, he reflected on his life, concluding that he was nothing but "a poor despised Mormon" with no one to comfort him in his solitude (20-25 April, 2, 4 May 1884). Like his physical ailments, feelings of depression continued to trail J. Golden during his sojourn in the South, especially when he felt most alone or least successful with his ministry. It seems reasonable to assume that the moods contributed to the ailments and the ailments to the moods.

During Roberts' frequent absences from Chattanooga on mission business, Kimball often ventured out into the countryside alone to bear his witness and preach. The results were not always what he hoped for.

On 29 May 1884 in Tullahoma, Tennessee, he went into a store operated by a Methodist minister and received a verbal thrashing so severe that Kimball was left virtually speechless and was tormented by the memory for several days. However, not all his encounters were quite this unpleasant. Back in the Tullahoma area on 22 July, he asked a couple named Sharp for lodging and found himself in the middle of a marital storm. Mr. Sharp seems to have been running around with a girl of nineteen, and after J. Golden's arrival Mrs. Sharp ventured the opinion that Mormonism would suit Mr. Sharp just fine.

J. Golden did have some experiences that touched him and possibly deepened his faith. Mission business took him to a member's home outside Columbia, Tennessee, at the end of July 1884, and he had to walk the last sixteen miles of the journey in stifling heat. Sick with chills and a fever, he was near exhaustion when he encountered a black man named John Tucker who offered to let Kimball ride his horse while he walked. They passed the time pleasantly enough talking politics, something which neither of them knew anything about, but soon parted. "We came to his house," J. Golden recorded in his 31 July diary entry, "and of course this required a separation. I felt thoughtful for the ride and asked myself as to how many white men would have treated a stranger so kind and besides this I told him who I was."

While in Columbia, Kimball learned of a female member of the Church who was sick and had asked for an elder to come administer to her and cure her. Led by another local member, Kimball soon found himself in "a miserable old hovel." The woman was in an old rickety bedstead with ragged and dirty bedclothes, and several ragged, dirty children hovered near her. J. Golden prayed with her and placed his hands on her to try to affect a cure; while she professed to feel much better, he felt sorry that he could do nothing more. He wrote on 7 August that the people of the area thought nothing of such sights; but when he saw them, they caused "feelings of emotion to swell my bosom."

This encounter with sickness and grinding poverty was followed within days by Mormonism's bloodiest hour in the South, the Cane Creek massacre. On Sunday morning, 10 August 1884, an anti-Mormon mob broke into a Mormon worship service in the home of James Condor near the tiny Lewis County community of Cane Creek, just a few miles west of Columbia. In an exchange of gunfire, the leader of the mob, David Hinson, was killed as were two local Church members and two missionary elders, John H. Gibbs and William S. Berry (Hatch 1968, 56-84; Wingfield 1958).

Still working in the Columbia area, Kimball headed for Cane Creek as soon as he heard about the tragedy. About thirteen miles from his destination, he encountered Elder Henry Thompson, who had man-

aged to escape the Condor home unharmed. Thompson convinced Kimball that he too would be killed if he went on. Kimball returned to Columbia and wired news of the killings to Roberts in Chattanooga. Roberts hurried to Columbia, arriving about 10:00 P.M. on 11 August, and he and Kimball made a plea to the governor's office for assistance. Roberts, disguised as a rough, common laborer, made a daring foray into Lewis County and retrieved the bodies of Gibbs and Berry from their shallow graves so that they could be returned to Utah. Kimball, meanwhile, had returned to Chattanooga and borrowed money from a local Jewish merchant, Barnard Moses, to buy caskets for the slain elders (Kimball 10-20 Aug. 1884; Hatch 1968, 69-78).

The stress of these activities took its toll on Kimball. Back in Chattanooga, he began having chills, beginning a long bout with malaria that at times became so severe he was almost forced to return to Utah. But he persevered. Mission activities declined following the Cane Creek massacre, often leaving him with little to do. Though all around him the city was aswirl with such activities as theatrical and operatic productions, Kimball kept to himself, claiming that he preferred his own company (Kimball 30-31 July, 10-12 Sept., 28 Sept.-5 Oct., 7 Oct. 1884).

After an absence of over two months, B. H. Roberts returned to Chattanooga in late October 1884, and he and Kimball began preparing for the fall gathering of southern converts. Included in this year's group, which would depart in early November and migrate to recently established Mormon communities in southern Colorado, were a number of Saints from Cane Creek, forced to leave their homes by threats of further violence. On 29 October Kimball traveled by train to Columbia to help plan these members' move from Cane Creek. The next day he visited a Sister Anderson, "a very fair lady belonging to the church," who insisted that he stay for dinner. He graciously accepted and then without further comment wrote, "Was forced to leave abruptly." We can only speculate on the reason for this cryptic notation.

Kimball returned to Chattanooga in early November, in time for the 1884 presidential election. He had never observed a national election before, and the experience both angered and intrigued him. On election day, 4 November 1884, the city streets teemed with mobs of blacks and whites cheering for Cleveland and Blaine. Kimball witnessed a near riot when a black man who had apparently voted Democratic was set upon by a group of angry black Republicans, and he noted that many blacks were driven to the polls in fine carriages even though he was convinced that they were ignorant of everything except what they knew naturally "as brute beasts." He admitted that his "bosom burned with indignation" as he witnessed these scenes, realizing that

his own people, "the true sons and daughters of God," could not cast ballots in these elections.

Yet as the outcome of the election hung in the balance throughout the day and into the next two, and as the partisan crowds continued to tramp through the city cheering the latest returns, he returned several times to the streets "to have the full benefits of the excitement." During one of these outings, he was shocked to suddenly confront a throng singing "hang Brigham on a sour apple tree," and he thought that if someone should cry "there goes a Mormon" his missionary career "would soon draw to a close." His summation on 6 November: "This to me is a picture of Hell—on earth."

Within days of the presidential election, the southern converts who were about to move to Colorado began arriving in Chattanooga. From small Mormon enclaves in Alabama, Georgia, Mississippi, and Virginia, fifty-three converts, including eight "colored people," reached Chattanooga on 12 November. As they huddled in the waiting room of the railway station, their sleeping children scattered about the floor, hundreds of curious onlookers gathered at the terminal door to catch a glimpse of them. Kimball admitted that they did not make a pleasant picture. "Most of them were poorly clad and if we can judge rightly by outward appearances they were poor in riches and deficient in education." Yet as he worked all day and well into the night preparing for their departure, he was bewildered by the world's bitterness towards his church for its effort to lift these people from poverty and degradation and place them in an area of the country "where they can become worthy of the name of human beings." The scene also convinced him that his fellow elders in the South, who had clearly been laboring among the poorest folk in the region, did not seek either praises or the comforts of life. Preparations for the journey finally completed around midnight, J. Golden slept for three hours and then boarded the train with B. H. Roberts and the emigrants at five o'clock on the morning of 13 November.

The trek westward took Kimball and his fellow Saints through Cincinnati where again, on 13 November, as the ragged emigrant party made its way from one train to another, hundreds of onlookers "gave way and stood with abhorance depicted on their countenances at the strange sight." No doubt feeling a degree of embarrassment, Kimball comforted himself with the thought of how these people would be changed in their new homes in the West.

From Cincinnati the group proceeded to St. Louis, Kansas City, and then on to La Jara, Colorado, the railroad town closest to the Mormon communities of Richfield, Manassa, and Ephraim. Despite earlier sympathy Kimball had expressed for these emigrants, as the

journey neared its end, his energy and tolerance were nearly exhausted. He recorded on 18 November: "Together with the crying and squalling of children, the clanging of wheels, I feel that if not mad, [I] will soon be so. Furthermore I am willing to make an affidavit that it takes generalship, patience and many other good qualities to enable a person to lead the Saints to Mt. Zion and retain a pleasant countenance."

His shepherding task completed, Kimball returned alone to Chattanooga. The rainy, gloomy weather of late November and early December matched and reinforced his mood. Lonely and bored by the daily routine of mission affairs, he found little that cheered him. He wrote on 11 December:

Why is it that we are so often bereft of the greater portion of the spirit and left to wrestle with our grosser passions and superfluity of weaknesses? I can't understand it. If it is to make us the better appreciate the joy, peace and comfort derived from the Holy Spirit, why such frequent doses? . . . It must be because we allow our evil passions to take possession of our bodies and through that cause repulse the pure spirit.

An element of suspense now entered Kimball's daily routine: Would the Church maintain the Southern States Mission after the murders at Cane Creek? B. H. Roberts had gone on from Colorado to Salt Lake City to discuss this question with Church officials. Many Utah Saints were convinced that the Church had done everything possible for the South and that no more elders' lives should be endangered by sending them into the region. By mid-December Kimball had not yet received any word on the final decision, and he admitted in diary entries on 15 and 20 December that the suspense was breaking him up.

Seeking a respite from both solitude and uncertainty, he left Chattanooga on 23 December and made his way northward to one of his old haunts, Amherst County, Virginia, for the Christmas holidays. Though he received a warm welcome from the Latter-day Saint families in the area, his visit was not entirely pleasant. Among other things, after an absence of several months he had difficulty adjusting again to the mountain diet of such staples as rabbit and cornbread. While in Amherst County, he received a letter from B. H. Roberts informing him that the work of the Southern States Mission would continue; and shortly thereafter his path again crossed that of Miss Mary Allen (23, 24, 28, 30 Dec. 1884).

Since her baptism, Mary Allen had become highly dissatisfied with certain Church doctrines, particularly celestial marriage, and was accused of saying false things about these beliefs. On 11 January 1885 she was summoned to the home of one of the local members to answer the charges against her, and J. Golden presided over the meeting. Mary showed no feeling of repentance, and Kimball wrote that she

spoke with contempt and ridicule, saying several times that she supposed they had reported her "to the head man of the shibang." When asked if she thought theirs was the true Church of Jesus Christ, she replied that all churches were right "if they done right." When Kimball finally offered a motion that she be excommunicated, it passed unanimously, at which point Mary Allen held up a hand, gave thanks to God that she was free, and with "a demonic laugh," left. J. Golden's summation: "She was a she devil personified."

A more pleasant encounter occurred on 13 January when Hyrum Kimball arrived from Bath County. After talking until five in the morning, the two men went back to Bath County where over the course of the next several days they visited a number of Mormon and non-Mormon families. Among the latter was the family of a Mr. Phillips, who shared their home with Phillips' married sister and her daughter Dora. Again, J. Golden was touched by the countenance and demeanor of an attractive southern woman. "The contour of her face was perfect and such a winsome smile as she could give cannot soon be forgotten. It was like shooting fiery darts into a man's heart," he wrote that day. If all that were not enough, she also played the banjo to perfection, sang like a nightingale, and appeared "as innocent as an angel." He concluded his description of the encounter with beautiful Dora with these not-too-convincing words: "Being *old* and full of guile I escaped without serious injury."

After several days of such pleasantries, J. Golden and Hyrum reluctantly parted on 30 January. As Golden made his way back toward Chattanooga, a mood of despondency again washed over him. "I am all alone. None to cheer me. The change is *too* great."

Kimball's work in Chattanooga was suddenly brightened near the middle of February by the arrival of John Morgan, the long-time president of the Southern States Mission. The two men had met earlier, though Kimball's narrative does not explain how, but had not seen each other for fifteen years. As they renewed their friendship, Kimball was impressed by the warm and cordial reception given Morgan by Chattanooga businessmen and public officials. Such deference, Kimball noted, "was quite a treat for this country." Kimball also learned from Morgan why Church officials waited until he was almost thirty to call him on a mission, while they called others in their early and mid-twenties. It seems that his name had come up several years earlier, but an unnamed individual, who had once heard J. Golden swearing while trying to lead a wild horse, objected. At that point, J. Golden's name was crossed from the list of prospective missionaries and was not brought up again for two years. Kimball wrote that language could not express his feelings at this

point, but he thought of the ancient words of Solomon: "Seest thou a man that is hasty in his words, there is more hope of a fool than him." For the time being, at least, he had learned a lesson about proper speech (12–13 Feb. 1885).

As Kimball's time in the South began drawing to a close, he enjoyed a visit from his brother Elias, who had been called on a mission to the southern states in October 1883, serving in various areas of Tennessee. Elias had already spent a few days in Chattanooga with J. Golden in mid-June 1884, and this time the two traveled by rail to New Orleans to attend the World's Industrial and Cotton Centennial Exposition. While in the Crescent City, they visited not only the exposition but Tulane University, St. Louis Cathedral, St. Vincent Infant Asylum, and the United States Mint (25 Feb.–9 March 1885).

Back in Chattanooga by 9 March, Kimball again became depressed when his brother left. However, on 23 March 1885 President Morgan informed him that he should return home to Utah because of his precarious health. Many times Kimball had expressed the fear that his illnesses would force him to leave his mission early; but having been in the South now for almost two years, he felt he could return home honorably. In his diary on that day he wrote: "This was in accordance with my feelings."

Things moved quickly. Kimball spent 24 March concluding his affairs at the mission office in Chattanooga and departed the following day. Heading north to visit his mother's family in New Jersey, he stopped en route to see Washington, D.C., where by chance he got a brief glimpse of "the notorious Edmunds," a reference to Vermont's Senator George F. Edmunds, Congress's leading opponent of polygamy. During a side trip to Philadelphia, he watched Edwin Booth perform the role of Iago in *Othello* and while touring the Bowery in New York was amazed by the effrontery of the women and young girls who commented on his appearance and invited him to go with them. While it is not clear if he had a traveling companion, he wrote, "We did not make further investigation, but returned." He next headed toward the West, reaching Ogden, Utah, early on the evening of 30 April 1885. Some of his last diary entries noted disparaging remarks made by fellow travelers about the Latter-day Saints and their leaders, particularly Brigham Young. Thus Kimball ended his journey much as he had begun it, listening to invectives hurled at his people, his beliefs, and his leaders (24–30 March, 16, 20, 28, 30 April 1885).

J. Golden Kimball's missionary diary reveals a great deal about both the Mormon experience in the late nineteenth-century South and the young J. Golden. Fortunately tragedies such as the murders at Cane Creek, Tennessee, were relatively rare in the Southern States

Mission. But the lesser acts of personal violence that batter and bruise the soul—threats of physical harm; cutting, disparaging remarks; derisive laughter; looks of condescension and disgust—were endured daily by Mormon elders, and the wounds left by these were not easily healed. Certainly J. Golden Kimball was not always able to shrug off these experiences. He was, after all, a far more complex man than his popular image would indicate. His wit and insight might well merit his title as “the Mormon Will Rogers”; but beneath, he was a thoughtful, sensitive man who struggled with feelings of inadequacy, who was sometimes moved to tears by the sufferings of others, and who felt deeply the slights that were on occasion inflicted on him.

Perhaps J. Golden best summarized this side of himself and his mission experiences in a poem he entitled simply “Missionary’s Chant.” Found at the beginning of Volume 2 of his diary and written about five months after his arrival in the South, verses five and six tell us a great deal about his travails, his hopes, and his longing in a strange and sometimes hostile land for what was familiar, nurturing, and warm.

The scoffs and jeers that people hurl
 At me from every side
 Are enough to cause despondency
 Of a heart that’s full of pride
 But I ask the Lord to bless me
 That I may always be
 As humble as our Saviour was
 And enjoy eternity

May this little book be usefull
 To my friends so kind and true
 And may my labors in the land
 Be a comfort unto you
 I hope that you remember me
 While I am here alone
 And may I meet you all again
 Around the dear old home.

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