

# From Temple Mormon to Anti-Mormon: The Ambivalent Odyssey of Increase Van Dusen

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IN 1847 A SMALL CRUDE PAMPHLET APPEARED in New York City bearing the title, *Positively True. A Dialogue between Adam and Eve, The Lord and the Devil, called the Endowment*.<sup>1</sup> A contemporary observer, Charles L. Woodward, described how the tract's author, Increase Van Dusen, "stood selling his pamphlets in [New York's] City Hall Square."<sup>2</sup> Van Dusen's foray into the literary world was successful, for he sold out the first 10,000 copies of his tract and published a second edition of another 10,000 within the year.<sup>3</sup>

In his tract, Van Dusen claims first-hand knowledge of the Mormon temple and its ceremonies. He describes how the members of the church "labored on this building with many privations, in heat and cold, and in

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1. Increase McGee Van Dusen and Maria Van Dusen, *Positively True. A Dialogue between Adam and Eve, The Lord and the Devil, called the Endowment: As was acted by Twelve or Fifteen Thousand, in Secret, in the Nauvoo Temple, said to be revealed from God as a Reward for Building that Splendid Edifice, and the Express Object for which it was built* (Albany: C. Killmer, 1847). The tract was 24 pages long.

2. Charles L. Woodward, *Bibliothica Scallawagiana. Catalogue of a Matchless Collection of Books, Pamphlets, Autographs, Pictures, etc. relating to Mormonism and Mormons. The 10 Years' Gatherings of Charles L. Woodward, who, enjoying superior facilities for their acquisition, has never let slip an opportunity, whether at public or private sale, of adding to their number, to be sold at vendue* (New York: Bangs & Co., 1880?), p. 10.

3. Dale L. Morgan, *Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints [Strangite]*, 44-45.

very many instances, hunger, supposing [they] would be rewarded for all [their] privations when the house was finished."<sup>4</sup>

He details what he called the seven degrees of the temple endowment, warning that some parts of the ceremony are "of rather to delicate of a nature to speak of as this work is designed to be read by all classes of both sex [sic]." He then recounts what he refers to as a "very queer and excitable farce."<sup>5</sup>

The initiates are led through a series of rooms which are said to represent the Garden of Eden and the fall of Adam and Eve, as well as what he describes as "a Burlesque on all the Sects." The final room, representing the celestial kingdom of God, is the setting for the teaching of the "Spiritual Wife Doctrine," or polygamy. The people are told that all former marriage contracts, as well as the laws of the land, have been "cut asunder"<sup>6</sup>: "It is now the woman's privilege to choose whom she sees fit; if she likes the one she has been living with, she can keep him; if not, she is at liberty to ship him and take another; and it is the man's privilege to have one, two, four, ten, or twenty . . ."<sup>7</sup>

Van Dusen's first pamphlet, which included his wife Maria's name on the cover,<sup>8</sup> is important for several reasons. It was the first tract to publish the Mormon endowment ceremony. It also reiterated the accusations of spiritual wifery which had been put forth by other apostate Mormons. And perhaps most importantly this and subsequent publications of the Van Dusens helped create an image of Mormonism as a licentious cult engulfed in a system of falsity and perversion.

Indeed, while the Van Dusens refrained in the first tract from discussing some aspects of the ceremony deemed too "delicate a nature to speak of," the six to seven later editions published under varying titles between 1847 and 1855, emphasized what they saw as the sensual, lascivious nature of the endowment ceremony. Thus in the first tract their experience of being washed and anointed was described as having their mouth, arms and breast washed "and so down to [their] feet . . . , etc."<sup>9</sup> Later editions described the same experience with a much more sensual description: "I wash . . . your breast, that you may give suck to a numerous posterity; your loins, bowells, etc., that you may conceive and bring forth spiritual sons

4. Van Dusen, 1.

5. *Ibid.*, 5, 8.

6. *Ibid.*, 10, 15-16.

7. *Ibid.*, 16.

8. While Maria Van Dusen's name appeared on the cover of a number of the tracts, Increase was probably the author as he appears to have been most active in public affairs. Very little is known of Maria Van Dusen's life or activities.

9. Van Dusen, 6.

and daughters; your \_\_\_\_\_, that you may \_\_\_\_\_ . . ."<sup>10</sup> In order to reinforce the imagery of lascivious behavior in the temple, woodcuts, such as the one portraying a half-naked woman on what is described as the "Bridal Couch of the Spiritual Wife," were added to the later editions of the Van Dusen tracts.<sup>11</sup>

The images created by the Van Dusens of licentious activities in the Mormon temple were quickly picked up by others in the efficient, albeit unofficial network of anti-Mormon writers. As early as 1848 a tract published in London quoted Van Dusen.<sup>12</sup>

Often descriptions of the temple ceremony were embellished by the new writers. In the late 1850s John Benjamin Franklin published a tract describing the temple ceremony in which men and women are washed in a state of nudity and men are checked "to see whether [they] be wounded in the testes" and some were made eunuchs.<sup>13</sup>

Thus with the numerous publications and republications of their temple account, as well as the use and embellishment of their story by such writers as John Benjamin Franklin, Increase and Maria Van Dusen were a significant influence on anti-Mormon literature and therefore on non-Mormon perceptions of Mormonism. These images created by the Van Dusens and subsequent writers would last into the twentieth century and, some might argue, still exist to some extent today.

With this in mind, an important question must be asked. Who were Increase and Maria Van Dusen and why did they write these exposés on Mormonism and the temple ceremony? Increase McGee Van Dusen<sup>14</sup> came

10. Increase McGee and Maria Van Dusen, *The "Endowment": or, Peculiar Ceremonies of the Mormons in Initiating a Spiritual Husband and Wife into The Mysteries of the Temple* (New York: n.p., 1852), [5-6].

11. *Ibid.*, 4.

12. John Thomas, *Sketch of the Rise, Progress, and Dispersion of the Mormons, to which is added an account of the Nauvoo Temple Mysteries, and other abominations practiced by this Impious Sect previous to their emigration to California, by Increase McGee Van Dusen; formerly one of the initiated* (London: Arthur Hall & Co., [1848]). A few examples of other tracts which included information from the Van Dusens are John Bowes, *Mormonism Exposed, in its Swindling and Licentious Abominations, Refuted in its Principles, and in the Claims of its Head, the Modern Mohammed, Joseph Smith, who is proved to have been a deceiver, and no prophet of God* (London: E. Ward, [1850?]), and T. W. P. Taylder, *Twenty Reasons for Rejecting Mormonism* (London: Partridge & Co., 1857).

13. John Benjamin Franklin, *The Mysteries and the Crimes of Mormonism; or, a Voice from the Utah Pandemonium* (London: C. Elliot, [1858]), p. 10. For a further analysis of anti-Mormon imagery developed by the Van Dusens, Franklin, and other writers, see Craig L. Foster, "Victorian Pornographic Imagery in Anti-Mormon Literature," *Journal of Mormon History* 19 (Spring 1993): 115-32.

14. In no available family record can I find any reference to Increase having the middle name McGee. It does not appear to be a middle name nor were there any McGees

from a prominent Dutch-American family. His fifth-great-grandfather Abraham Pietersen Van Deursen was born in 1607 in Haarlem, Holland, and was an active member of the Dutch Reformed Church. He came to New Amsterdam (now New York) before 1636 and settled on what is now Broadway where he was a miller and innkeeper.<sup>15</sup>

Several of Abraham's sons later settled in Albany where they intermarried with such prominent Dutch-American families as the Van Burens and Van Benthuydens. In 1767 John Van Deusen was born in Clavarack, New York. In 1790 he married Marytje "Polly" Decker (also spelled Deccker) of the same town. They were the parents of eleven children, Increase being the ninth.<sup>16</sup>

Increase was born on 25 May 1809 in Hillsdale, which was located next to Copake where the family lived for a number of years. His early years appear to have been spent in relative comfort as his father was a tavern keeper and involved in community affairs.<sup>17</sup> In 1826 John Van Dusen died. John had been an active member of the West Copake Reformed Church in his early years but apparently changed to the Methodist Episcopal Church as he was buried in their churchyard.<sup>18</sup>

In 1833, at the age of twenty-four, Increase traveled to Lapier, Michigan, where he met and married Maria Hoffman. Not much is known about Maria or her family except that she was originally from New York, apparently from the same part of the state as Increase. Either immediately before or during this time Increase acted as a Methodist exhorter or preacher.<sup>19</sup>

The Van Dusens moved to Oakland County, Michigan, sometime after their marriage and were residing there when they were baptized into the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints in about 1841 or 1842. In 1843

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in the immediate area of Copake, New York.

15. Albert F. Van Deusen, *Van Deursen Family* (New York: Frank Alleman Genealogical Company, 1911), 1. The Van Deursen/VanDeusen family is said to have originally come from the southern part of the Netherlands (what is now Belgium). According to Cherry Laura Van Deusen Pratt, *The Genealogy of Rev. W. H. Van Deusen* (Rockford, OH: Rockford Press, 1969), 1, Abraham was somewhat prominent in New Amsterdam because his grandfather had been closely associated with the Prince of Orange (perhaps even a relative to the House of Orange).

16. *Ibid.*, 87, 160-61. Ironically, the inter-marriages would not only have made Increase a distant relative of President Martin Van Buren, but also of Mary Elizabeth Rollins Lightner, a plural wife of Joseph Smith. Mary's mother was a Van Benthuyden from Albany.

17. "Town of Livingston, Various Records, 1802-1829," *The Columbia* 7 (Fourth Quarter, 1991): 127-28. Livingston is located next to Copake and Hillsdale.

18. "West Copake Reformed Church, members," *The Columbia* 6 (First Quarter, 1990): 15; *Gravestone Inscriptions: Columbia County, New York* (S.l.: s.n., 1938).

19. "Obituary," *Painville Telegraph*, 10 Aug. 1882, 3.

Increase served a Mormon mission in Michigan where he acted as a clerk at a mission conference held in Lapeer on 20-22 January.<sup>20</sup>

In 1843 the Van Dusens moved to Nauvoo, Illinois, to be closer to the main body of the church. They lived on a third of an acre lot about four and a half blocks southeast of the temple site. Increase, in fact, donated time working on the temple as a carpenter. The couple's living quarters was probably a small log house, as their taxes for 1843 were not high.<sup>21</sup>

The Van Dusens lived modestly in Nauvoo and were actively involved in the church and community. On 29 December 1843 a petition was presented to the city requesting that Mulholland Street be opened to the corporation line. Increase was one of the petition's signers. Also in December both Increase and Maria signed the Mormons' Missouri Redress Petition to the United States Congress.<sup>22</sup>

In April 1844 Increase took advantage of the new doctrine on baptism for the dead and was baptized in behalf of his father John and his sister Katherine Vosburg.<sup>23</sup> The following 3 December Increase was ordained a Seventy and received into the Seventh Quorum of Seventy.<sup>24</sup>

The next year Increase was active in quorum business. He gave a speech to the quorum substantiating the Book of Mormon from the scriptures, donated a total of \$5.50 to provide assistance for President Joseph Young, and on 28 December 1845 he listened to remarks given by Randolph Alexander on preparing for the temple endowments and donated 32 1/2 cents to provide "Oil Sufficiant for [their] Anointing [sic]."<sup>25</sup>

On the morning of 29 January 1846 Increase and Maria entered the Nauvoo temple where they participated in the endowment ceremony. According to the Manuscript History of Brigham Young, Brigham Young was in the temple hiding from troops trying to arrest him. Young recorded that he "continued giving endowments in the temple" and that 133 persons

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20. Journal History, 20 Jan. 1843, 1, archives, historical department, Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, Salt Lake City, Utah (hereafter LDS archives).

21. The 1843 Nauvoo Tax List. The total taxes they paid for their lot and property on Block 3, Lot 3 of the Kimball's First Survey was \$40; \$25 for land, \$12 for personal property, and \$3 for watch rates.

22. "1843 Petition to the United States Congress," *The Nauvoo Journal* 1 (July/Oct. 1889): 85. While neither Increase nor Marie experienced the Missouri problems, they probably signed the petition as an act of support for their fellow members. Their names are on page 12 of the petition and they are listed as living in the Third Ward.

23. *Nauvoo Baptisms for the Dead Index* (Salt Lake City: Genealogical Society of Utah, n.d.). The index identifies her as Katherine Vosburg while *Van Deusen Family*, 160, identifies her as Freelove Van Deusen who married Henry Vosburg in 1815.

24. General Record of the Seventies, Book B (1844-1847), 21, LDS archives.

25. Nauvoo Seventh Quorum of Seventy Minutes, pp. [10, 13, 16, 39], Daughters of the Utah Pioneers Collection, 1828-1963, LDS archives.

received their endowments.<sup>26</sup> Included among that number were Increase and Maria Van Dusen.

By April 1846, however, Increase and Maria had defected from Mormonism. While there are no contemporary documents which give the reason for the Van Dusens' disaffection, a major part of their decision to abandon the church rested on their experience in the temple.<sup>27</sup> Increase, however, did not abandon Mormonism entirely; he briefly united with self-proclaimed Mormon schismatic, James J. Strang.

On 7 April 1846 Increase attended a conference presided over by Strang in Voree, Wisconsin. Strang, a recent Mormon convert, claimed to have received a letter written by Joseph Smith on 18 June 1844 appointing him as his successor. He also stated that at the time of Joseph Smith's death an angel appeared to him and ordained him Joseph's successor. A number of important Latter-day Saints believed and followed Strang, including William Smith (Joseph Smith's younger brother), John E. Page (a former member of the Council of Twelve Apostles), and William Marks (former president of the Nauvoo stake).<sup>28</sup>

Joining this group was Increase Van Dusen who acted as a witness against the LDS Quorum of the Twelve *in abstenia* on charges they were conspiring to overthrow the order of the church.<sup>29</sup> They were also charged with teaching that polygamy, fornication, adultery, and concubinage were lawful and commendable and that murder, theft, and rebellion were justifiable and necessary in building up God's kingdom. After the various

26. Elden J. Watson, ed., *Manuscript History of Brigham Young, 1846-1847* (Salt Lake City: Eldon J. Watson, 1971), 24.

27. Another reason was the doctrine of plural marriage.

28. Steven L. Shields, *Divergent Paths of the Restoration: A History of the Latter Day Saint Movement*, rev. and enl. 3rd ed., (Bountiful, UT: Restoration Research, 1982), 40-41. Strang also claimed to have discovered metal plates which contained the record of "Rajah Manchore of Vorito" in which it was promised that there would be a "forerunner" (Joseph Smith) and then a "mighty prophet" (Strang). See Milo M. Quaife, *The Kingdom of Saint James: A Narrative of the Mormons* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1930), 18-19.

29. It is interesting to see the names of the witnesses and how they eventually stood with the Strangite movement: John E. Page was appointed one of Strang's twelve apostles and excommunicated in 1849; Jehiel Savage was appointed an apostle in 1846; Collins Pemberton was excommunicated in October 1846 for immoral conduct and later wrote two anti-Strang tracts; Moses Smith was appointed an apostle in April 1846 and died in 1849; John Gaylord was appointed a member of the presidency and excommunicated in 1848; James M. Adams was appointed an apostle in April 1846, excommunicated in 1847, and published an anti-Strang tract; Samuel Shaw was a member of Strang's church throughout his life; Joseph Younger was excommunicated in July 1847; Rueben Miller was appointed president of the Voree stake in April 1846 and left the church by October 1846 when he published an anti-Strang tract; and Increase Van Dusen was excommunicated in 1849.

testimonies, Strang excommunicated Brigham Young and eight other members of the Twelve and "delivered [them] over to the buffetings of Satan in the flesh."<sup>30</sup>

On 5 May 1846 Increase was ordained an Elder in the Second Quorum of Seventies, received a license to preach from Strang, and was told to travel to Columbia County, New York.<sup>31</sup>

It appears that he first returned to Michigan where he preached some, as well as spending five months preaching in Syracuse, New York.<sup>32</sup> From Syracuse Increase wrote to Strang, "I feel almost as if I was alone in the world and especially in the work of the Lord I have had sickness in my family more or less since I have been here consequently I have been detained at home most of the time [sic]."<sup>33</sup>

Increase obviously was experiencing an inner struggle for he wrote, "All I have heard from you at Voree is evil and it makes me mad because I can't know the truth." However, he assured Strang, "I know God will perform his work that he begun by Joseph and you are his prophet," but then continued by declaring,

my faith is not on you at all although I believe the testimony you have given concerning this work but I don't believe in some of the things you have done fellowshipping the Devil and hugging up all the trash of the church with all their sins now I do know that some men you called good men at the April conference are as corrupt as hell and I know further that the whole church was reprobate concerning the faith previous to Joseph's death . . . [sic]<sup>34</sup>

By early 1847 Van Dusen's poverty and frustration at lack of communication with the church in Voree appears to have been too much of a strain. He ended his ministry in Syracuse and moved his family to New York City.<sup>35</sup>

Shortly after their arrival in New York, Increase and Maria published their first tract. During the next two years Increase was busy writing and

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30. *Chronicles of Voree*, 72-76. There were only nine excommunications because there was a vacancy in the Twelve, John E. Page had accepted Strang, and they decided to allow Wilford Woodruff to return from England and see which way he went before judging him.

31. *Chronicles of Voree*, 80.

32. *Painsville Telegraph*, 10 Aug. 1882, 3. Also, Lorenzo Dow Hickey to James J. Strang, 26 Sept. and 11 Oct. 1846, James J. Strang Papers, Yale University, New Haven, Connecticut, mentions that Increase Van Dusen had left for the east to go to New York.

33. Increase Van Dusen to James J. Strang, 3 Jan. 1847, Strang Papers.

34. *Ibid.*

35. *Painsville Telegraph*, 10 Aug. 1882, 3.

publishing and was out of contact with Strang, although he still viewed him as a prophet of God. By June 1849, however, Increase appears to have had some concern about the correctness of the course he had taken and once again wrote to Strang,

I confess my folly in the course I have taken the last two years in leaving the work of God and turning to my own in publishing the Endowment as given by the Imposter B. Young. I sinned not that I believe it should be kept A secret but it was fare beneath my calling to do so I stooped low in doing it I was called by the Great God to perform another work the Great principles of truth had been revealed to me in mighty vision + Revelation of God . . . I say therefore to all the honest in heart in all the world I hereby confess my sin . . .<sup>36</sup>

Increase's reconciliation with Strang was short lived, however. From 5 to 8 October 1849 a conference was held in New York City. Various leaders of the church, including Strang, apostle George J. Adams, and newly appointed apostle Lorenzo Dow Hickey, were present. While the meetings went well at first, a sign that there was trouble occurred when Strang suggested postponing a proposal that Increase accompany Lorenzo Hickey on a mission to Philadelphia.<sup>37</sup>

Both Increase and Hickey had been friends in Oakland County, Michigan, when they first converted to Mormonism, and both at a later time had rejected the doctrine of plural marriage. Once again, it was the doctrine of plural marriage which precipitated a violent confrontation between Increase and Strang. Apparently, Hickey had received several letters from his wife on Beaver Island, headquarters of Strang's church, accusing Strang of adultery and "spiritual-wifery."

The conflict came to a head in one of the conference meetings when Hickey accused Strang "with adultery, fornication, spiritual-wifery, and all the abominations that were ever practiced at Nauvoo, and denounced him as a deceiver, an imposter, and a false prophet."<sup>38</sup> Increase fell into a fit of rage and began "screaming like a madman." Strang was temporarily driven from the meeting.<sup>39</sup>

Ironically, the charges of plural marriage, although denied by Strang, were true, and his first plural wife, Elvira Fields, was present at the meeting. However, Elvira was dressed as a young man and had been

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36. Increase Van Dusen to James J. Strang, 18 June, 1849, Strang Papers.

37. *Gospel Herald*, 15 Nov. 1849, in John Cumming, *Lorenzo Dow Hickey: The Last of the Twelve* (S.l.: s.n., 1966?), [7], as reprinted from *Michigan History* (Mar. 1966).

38. *Ibid.*

39. *Ibid.*; Quaiife, 102-103.



introduced to the congregation as Charles J. Douglas, personal secretary to Strang.<sup>40</sup>

Within two weeks both Increase and Hickey were tried for their membership. During the proceedings, Increase was charged with misconduct and having physically threatened Strang. He admitted to most of the charges and explained that he could become emotional and passionate when angered. However, when he was charged with saying that the church and the Book of Mormon was a "humbug from beginning to end," he defended himself by stating that "he might have said so for the purpose of selling his books but he never designed it in his heart."<sup>41</sup> His explanation was not enough, for he was excommunicated by Strang and "delivered over to the buffetings of Satan until the day of redemption." Hickey was disfellowshipped for "following after the diabolical revelations of Increase Van Dusen."<sup>42</sup>

The confrontation and trial proved to be too much for Hickey's psyche and he suffered an emotional break-down. George J. Adams later found Hickey in a lunatic asylum where he begged Adams to heal him. Adams wrote to Strang in December that he had cast a devil out of Hickey and that he "don't speak to Van-Devil, Increase Duzen [sic]" anymore. Indeed, Hickey found himself again able to defend Strang to the world. On 5 December Adams wrote to Strang, describing a testimony meeting the night before: "Van Devil Duzen was there, but we bound up the Devils so tight in him, that he could not open his mouth and he Trembled like a reed shaken by the wind after the meeting he raged a little. Bro. Hickey told him to his face that he was a liar, a knave, a pupy, and a Scoundril [sic]."<sup>43</sup>

It is difficult to understand why Hickey would turn from his friend, Increase Van Dusen. One can only imagine that Hickey had descended to the lowest point of his life, emotionally and psychologically. First, he had been thrust out of an organization in which he had so strongly believed. Second, and as a direct result of the emotional trauma of the first experience, he had suffered an emotional breakdown and had been incarcerated in a mental hospital. Hickey viewed Adams's appearance at the hospital and his own healing as a miracle that reconfirmed his belief in the divine mission of Strang.

While Hickey was reconverted to Strang's teachings, Increase was not. In late 1849 he published a tract containing revelations which he had

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40. Cumming, [8]; Quaife, 102-103.

41. Proceedings of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints, ca. Oct.-Nov. 1849, Strang Papers.

42. *Ibid.*; Cumming, [7].

43. George J. Adams to James J. Strang, 3 Dec. 1849, and George J. Adams to James J. Strang, 5 Dec. 1849, Strang Papers.

received declaring that Strang and Adams were led by the devil. He also sent his revelations and other exhortations to Strang, for on 19 December 1849 Strang wrote from Baltimore, where he was staying, and told Increase to stop sending him letters and other correspondence.<sup>44</sup>

Increase angrily responded on the same letter that he only sent important things and that he would continue to do so. He then stated that God had revealed to him "That you [Strang] are establishing certain damnable heresies for which God's hand shall be on you heavy for evil and not for good except you repent." Expressing his contempt of Adams, he continued, "You can send as many bags of wind As you can . . . with sutch lies and the truth will remain [sic]." He then closed by writing, "God has placed in the Church Apostles, Prophets, etc. for the perfecting of the saints. And we do not read of the perfecting of the saints by Endowments + covenants or secret societies or any such thing."<sup>45</sup>

Whether this final existing correspondence between Van Dusen and Strang was really the last and Increase was able to exercise himself of Mormonism is doubtful. Evidence of this is the marked bitterness that appears in later Van Dusen tracts that was not as evident in the first one. For example, in the fifth edition (1852) Van Dusen warns readers that "The whole Mormon world in California (Utah) is leaguuing in a dark conspiracy for [the country's] ruin, but more particularly Illinois and Missouri."<sup>46</sup>

Ironically, Van Dusen's fifth edition still included the favorable account of Joseph Smith's first vision which was included in the first tract when it was used as a missionary tool in behalf of Strang. This inclusion of Smith's history could suggest a continued ambivalence toward Joseph Smith on the part of Increase and Maria Van Dusen.

While no evidence has been found that the Van Dusens ever rejoined any branch of Mormonism, they later moved to Kirtland, Ohio. It is not known why they selected Kirtland as their home in late 1860, but it appears that they left New York City in 1852 and returned to Michigan where Maria gave birth to a son named Charles. By early 1860 they were again in New York where a son named Walter was born; by fall of that same year they had moved to Ohio.<sup>47</sup>

The Van Dusens continued to live in modest circumstances in Kirtland.

44. James J. Strang to Increase M. Van Deusen, 19 Dec. 1849, Strang Papers.

45. *Ibid.*, response on same returned to Strang on 21 Dec. 1849.

46. Van Dusen, *The "Endowment:" or, Peculiar ceremonies of the Mormons*, [2]. While Van Dusen's comments were meant to be inflammatory, there was obviously great bitterness on the part of Mormons toward Missouri and Illinois and a number of members of the Mormon church were known to pray for God's punishment against the inhabitants of those two states.

47. United States Census of 1870, State of Ohio, County of Lake, 19.

They owned a small farm of 3 1/2 acres worth \$80 in 1868-69.<sup>48</sup> In 1860 Van Dusen's total real and personal worth totaled \$1,500. His declining years were painful as his obituary mentions that he had "been ill a long time with disease of the kidneys, suffering intensely at times." On 4 August 1882 Increase Van Dusen died at his home in Kirtland. The funeral was held in his home on 6 August,<sup>49</sup> and he was buried in the Kirtland temple cemetery.

Maria continued to live in Kirtland until her death on 4 April 1906 at the home of her daughter and son-in-law, Emma and Charles E. Metcalf. She was buried next to her husband. Unfortunately, little is known about Maria as she left no written record. However, she, like many women of her age, knew the pain of losing a child. For in 1900 she stated that she was the mother of ten children, only three of whom were still living.<sup>50</sup> She was survived by the three children, all of whom lived in the Kirtland area.

While some light has been shed on the enigmatic life of Increase and Maria Van Dusen, one question remains. What was the driving force behind the publication and republication of their exposés of the temple ceremony? In light of some of Increase's comments, combined with his troubled financial circumstances, the pursuit of monetary gain cannot be ruled out. However, a deeper explanation appears more satisfying.

Increase and Maria were "seekers" who, like so many other men and women, were looking for the primitive gospel of Jesus Christ.<sup>51</sup> Early Mormonism's millenarian teachings and emphasis on the restoration of all things attracted people seeking the pure gospel which they believed had been taken from early Christianity. They, like others, tried several religions before accepting the message of Joseph Smith.

For the Van Dusens, as for others, Mormonism turned out not to be the simple, primitive church they were seeking. Whatever the reasons were—the plurality of gods, eternal progression, the degrees of glory, the temple ceremony, plural marriage—many seekers who found their way into Mormonism also found a reason to continue their search.

The same was true for the Van Dusens. Their concept of primitive Christianity did not include secret temple ceremonies and plural marriage. Burned once by Brigham Young and the twelve apostles, Increase and

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48. Treasurer's Duplicate of taxes for Lake County, Ohio, 1868-69, n.p.

49. "Obituary," *Painsville Telegraph*, 10 Aug. 1882, 3.

50. "Death of a Kirtland Woman," *Painsville Evening Telegraph*, 5 Apr. 1906, 1. United States Census of 1900, State of Ohio, County of Lake, 26A. While the gravestone in the Kirtland temple cemetery gives Maria's death year as 1901, the newspaper is dated 1906.

51. I use Dan Vogel's definition of a seeker as one who believed there had been an apostasy from primitive Christianity and that there needed to be a radical restoration of the gospel. See his *Religious Seekers and the Advent of Mormonism* (Salt Lake City: Signature Books, 1988), 8.

Maria turned to James J. Strang as the true successor of Joseph Smith, only to be burned again. And while many disappointed seekers quietly left Mormonism, as they had done with other religious denominations in the past, the Van Dusens, with their intense feelings of having been betrayed, were compelled to speak out against "temple" Mormonism.

It also appears that Increase and Maria followed the process of others who leave a religious or social organization which required intense mental and spiritual devotion, as well as some form of physical or material sacrifice: denial, anger and frustration, depression, and finally acceptance and reconciliation. People who have lost faith in Mormonism appear to experience these four stages to varying degrees. The length and intensity of the first three depend on each person's personality and world view. Most who leave Mormonism or a similar organization express their anger and frustration and then continue to acceptance and reconciliation.

Some people, however, are struck to their emotional core by the death of their faith in a belief-system which once meant so much but has now become the cause of emotional and spiritual pain. They lash out in a sense of anger and betrayal with an intense campaign of exposure. For some, only a written exposé or series of lectures to "tell it all" achieves the catharsis that leads to acceptance of a life without the belief-system which had previously been so important.

Some take a longer time to pass through the anger and frustration stage and subsequent depression which can follow. And some never progress beyond that stage to acceptance and reconciliation.<sup>52</sup> While it took Increase and Maria Van Dusen years to reach reconciliation, they eventually did.

But even with his bitter disappointments with the various branches of Mormonism and the inner turmoil and anguish which culminated with his final break with Mormonism, Increase Van Dusen remained a seeker firmly believing that "the gift of prophesy and power of healing may be, and ought to be, in the church."<sup>53</sup> While Increase and Maria had traveled a long, often painful, road from temple Mormons to anti-Mormons, they still in the end hoped for a simple, primitive gospel. Perhaps they were looking for what they had glimpsed for a fleeting moment in the wake of their conversion to Mormonism in 1841-42.

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52. Fawn M. Brodie is an example of a person who experienced to varying degrees this four-step process. Newell G. Bringhurst, Brodie's biographer, recognized the four stages in her life but emphasized that while she reconciled her break with Mormonism, she was never able to completely leave it (telephone interview with Newell G. Bringhurst, 13 Nov. 1993). Other examples of anti-Mormons who may have followed this process are John C. Bennett, Andrew Parrot, and Fanny Stenhouse.

53. "Obituary," 3.