

“To Set in Order the House of God”: The Search for the Elusive “One Mighty and Strong”

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When Orson Pratt, apostle and LDS Church historian, revised the Doctrine and Covenants in 1876 at the direction of Brigham Young, he included Section 85 among some twenty-five other new sections. Section 85 is a portion of a letter written by the Prophet Joseph Smith at Kirtland, Ohio, on November 27, 1832. Presumably dictated by Joseph Smith to his scribe Frederick G. Williams, the letter was mailed to William Wine Phelps, a leading high priest and editor of the Missouri church's newspaper the *Evening and the Morning Star*. It contained information concerning the efforts of Bishop Edward Partridge to implement the law of consecration amidst grumbling and disorder on the part of the Saints gathered there.

Phelps, in turn, printed a lengthy excerpt from the letter in the *Evening and the Morning Star* under the heading “Let Every Man Learn His Duty,” without any context or editorial commentary, thus implying that this message was designated for the Saints in Zion at that time.¹ The complete letter was printed in the *Times and Seasons* in October 1844 and the *Millennial Star* in June 1852, both times without explanation. The letter ended with: “I have obtained ten subscribers for the Star, &c. Love for all the brethren. Yours in bonds, Amen. Joseph Smith, jun.”²

It is not known why Orson Pratt determined that portions of Joseph Smith's letter to Phelps should be canonized by placement in the LDS Doctrine and Covenants. It is doubtful, however, that he realized that a few verses from the letter, those referring to “one mighty and strong,” would become a divisive issue in his church. These verses read:

Yea, thus saith the still small voice, which whispereth through and pierceth all things, and often times it makes my bones to quake while it maketh manifest, saying:

And it shall come to pass, that I, the Lord God, will send one mighty and strong, holding the scepter of power in his hand, clothed with light for a covering, whose mouth shall utter words, eternal words; while his bowels shall be a fountain of truth, to set in order the house of God, and to arrange by lot, the inheritances of the saints whose names are found, and the names of their fathers, and of their children, enrolled in the book of the law of God;

While that man, who was called of God and appointed, that putteth forth his hand to steady the ark of God, shall fall by the shaft of death, like as a tree that is smitten by the vivid shaft of lightning. (D&C 85:6-8)

Strangely, the "one mighty and strong" who would "set in order the house of God" is not identified, nor is it revealed when he would perform this wonderful work, what "set in order" means, and the criteria for determining if the "setting in order" has been completed. The assertion that this individual will hold "the scepter of power in his hand" and that he will be "clothed with light for a covering" only add to speculation about the meaning of these verses. The issue is further confused by the statement that this person will die while attempting to "steady the ark of God." Finally, the verses can be interpreted as referring to two individuals: (1) one mighty and strong and (2) the man who is called of God and appointed to steady the ark of God.³

The foregoing ambiguities have invited private interpretations by dissenters among the branches into which Mormonism has been divided since the death of Joseph Smith, particularly the two chief branches, the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints (LDS) and the Reorganized Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints (RLDS/Community of Christ). This article examines the relationship between these two traditions and the persons who claim to be or are thought by others to be the one mighty and strong who will set a supposedly errant church in order.

In the LDS tradition, those claiming to be or to know the one mighty and strong tend to be fundamentalists, persons who believe the Church went wrong by abandoning polygamy or other important doctrines. A key element of this struggle is the failed attempt by the 1905 First Presidency to give a definitive interpretation which would quash speculation among both the faithful and dissenters about the identity and duties of the one mighty and strong. The inability of LDS scholars to agree about

the identity of the one mighty and strong and their diverse teachings about when and where the mission will take place emphasize the complexity of this topic. Diversity is also the keyword among fundamentalist claimants to this title, for they differ widely in their beliefs about this fabled individual. Although the Reorganized Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints did not canonize any part of the November 27, 1832, letter from the Prophet to Phelps, some missionaries taught that Joseph Smith III was the one mighty and strong. Smith did not confirm or deny this interpretation until after 1900 when the Church essentially agreed that the verses referring to the one mighty and strong best described the future mission of Jesus Christ. By 1905 Smith was telling inquirers he did not claim to be the one mighty and strong, and speculation on this point diminished. As we shall see later, it is one of the ironies of Mormon history that RLDS fundamentalists⁴ of the Remnant Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints currently believe that their president and prophet, Frederick Niels Larsen, is the one mighty and strong.

The One Mighty and Strong in the LDS Tradition

Interestingly, William W. Phelps,⁵ the Church official who received the 1832 letter from Joseph Smith and who should have been the best qualified to give the correct interpretation, wrote a complicated explanation to Brigham Young on May 6, 1861. After quoting the verses in question, Phelps, possibly wanting to foster Young's good will by agreeing that Adam was God, explained: "Now this revelation was sent to me in Zion, and his [Joseph Smith's] reference to the time when Adam, our father & God, comes at the beginning of our Eternal Lot of inheritance.—according as our names are found in the law of the Lord, while the fools that received the priesthood, like the fool that took his 'one talent' and hid it, or reached out to steady the ark, will find themselves where the rich man did—in hell, with plenty of fire, but no water."⁶

As the LDS Church distanced itself from previously acceptable practices and doctrines such as polygamy, the Adam-God doctrine, and the law of consecration, conservative schismatic elements did their best to maintain these and other fundamental beliefs as tenets of their faith. Fundamentalists, as they are now called among the Latter-day Saints, generally believed that John Taylor was the last prophet who was acceptable to God.⁷ It should be noted, however, that George Q. Cannon, speaking at Tooele, Utah, on October 29, 1882, suggested that a considerable level of

dissent was already present in the Church during Taylor's presidency. Cannon, a member of the First Presidency and a territorial representative to the U.S. Congress, explained that, since his recent return to Utah from Washington,

I have heard more of new prophets and revelators, and their revelations, than I have heard of for several years. I do not know how many prophets I have heard of who have arisen; I do not know how many revelations I have heard of that have been given; but there have been quite a number. Many revelations have been sent to me by persons who claim the right to preside over the Church and to be the Prophet of the Church. President Taylor has been the recipient of a number of similar communications, each one setting forth his claim to the presidency of the Church, and to the prophetic office; and some of them requiring us to accept the author as the person whom God has designated to be the revelator to and the President of the Church.⁸

Evidence of early dissent among the Utah Mormons may also be seen in a polemic attack on them by Joseph Luff, editor of the RLDS *Saint's Advocate* in November 1885. Luff, in an article titled "Mighty and Strong," quoted Doctrine and Covenants 85:7, then explained that members of the RLDS were aware of public and private remarks made by Utah Mormons concerning the "expected coming of a 'Mighty and Strong' one to deliver the Saints in Utah from bondage."⁹

Two years later, the year of John Taylor's death, LDS fundamentalist James Brighouse, who believed in reincarnation, published the first of five tracts setting forth perceived deficiencies in the LDS Church and his claims to be not only the one mighty and strong but also the Son of Man, Adam, Enoch, and Joseph Smith. Not surprisingly, he claimed that God had commissioned him to "set in order the house of God, and to arrange by lot the inheritances of the Saints." However, Brighouse faded into obscurity without founding a church.¹⁰

Early in the twentieth century, other individuals claiming to be the one mighty and strong may be identified. In 1904, Samuel Eastman announced his call to be the one mighty and strong. Like Brighouse, he felt that the LDS Church should be reformed and did not organize a new church. He was apparently excommunicated by a bishop's court on December 1, 1905, and also faded into obscurity.¹¹ His excommunication was preceded by that of John T. Clark in May of 1905, who was excommunicated not for involvement with plural marriage but for his claims that he was the one mighty and strong.¹²

B. H. Roberts of the LDS First Quorum of Seventy indicated the need for a formal interpretation of the verses about the one mighty and strong because some of the German Saints and others, including a counselor of a Bishop Ek in Salt Lake City, were “disaffected in their faith” due to varying interpretations about the one mighty and strong. Accordingly, Roberts was directed “to write a paper setting forth a full explanation of this revelation.”¹³ The First Presidency, consisting of Joseph F. Smith, John R. Winder, and Anthon H. Lund, in their efforts to end speculation about the one mighty and strong, met with Apostles John Henry Smith, Reed Smoot, Hyrum M. Smith, George Albert Smith, and B. H. Roberts¹⁴ of the First Council of Seventy on November 9, 1905. A document “on the question of the one spoken of in Section 85 of the D&C” was read and was presumably discussed. The following day the hierarchical group was joined by Apostle Charles W. Penrose, the rest of the First Council of Seventy (Seymour B. Young, George Reynolds, J. Golden Kimball, Rulon S. Wells, and Joseph W. McMurrin), Patriarch John Smith; and William B. Preston and Robert T. Burton of the Presiding Bishopric. The collective leadership of the Church “decided to publish a Document on the question of the one mighty and strong spoken of in the D. & C.”¹⁵ The document titled “One Mighty and Strong” was signed by Joseph F. Smith, John R. Winder, and Anthon H. Lund and was published in the *Deseret Evening News* on November 11, 1905, and the *Deseret Semi-Weekly News* two days later.¹⁶

In their introductory remarks, the First Presidency acknowledged: “Perhaps no other passage in the revelations of the Lord, in this dispensation, has given rise to so much speculation as this one.” They then vented their displeasure with men who claimed to be the one mighty and strong: “It has been used by vain and foolish men to bolster up their vagaries of speculation, and in some cases their pretensions to great power and high positions they want to attain in the Church.”¹⁷ After emphasizing that the Church is “completely organized,” the First Presidency indicated that, “when the man who would divide unto the Saints their inheritances comes he will be designated by the inspiration of the Lord to proper authorities of the Church, appointed and sustained according to the order provided for the government of the Church.” They emphasized, however, that as an authorized First Presidency currently stood at the head of the Church and would in the future—the individual who would divide the inheritances to

the Saints would be inspired to report to them and work under their supervision.

Thus, they appeared, at this point in the statement, to endorse the idea that one mighty and strong would come in the future. However, after quoting the complete 1832 letter from Smith to Phelps, the First Presidency explained that the portion about the one mighty and strong "relates to the affairs of the Church in Missouri, the gathering of the Saints to that land and obtaining their inheritances under the law of consecration and stewardship." Bishop Edward Partridge was identified as "the one called and appointed to divide by lot unto the Saints their inheritances" and also as the person who would die "by the shaft of death." They then rhetorically asked, "Now, as to the 'one mighty and strong,' who shall be sent of God, to 'set in order the house of God, and to arrange by lot the inheritance of the Saints.' Who is he?" In answer, they first explained that since Partridge repented of his rebellious actions and did not "fall by the shaft of death," the part of the prophecy relating to setting in order the house of God and arranging by lot the inheritances of the Saints "may also be considered as having passed away and the whole incident of the prophecy closed." Then, in a statement that would further damage their credibility, the First Presidency continued their "authorized" interpretation with the explanation that Orson Pratt, an apostle and Church historian, had taught that Bishop Partridge was the one mighty and strong:

We do not feel that his [Partridge's] sad and early death was the fulfillment of the threatened judgment of the revelation. But that he was the man so threatened in that revelation, there can be no question; not only on account of what is here set forth, but also because Orson Pratt, one familiar with Edward Partridge, and an active participant in all these historical matters, publicly declared from the pulpit in Salt Lake City, about the time of the death of President Young, that the man referred to in that passage of the revelation in question, was Bishop Edward Partridge. Of the fact of his statement, there can be no doubt; and at the time he was the historian of the Church as well as a member of the quorum of the Apostles.¹⁸

Strangely, the Presidency then added: "If however, there are those who will still insist that the prophecy concerning the coming of 'one mighty and strong' is still to be regarded as relating to the future, let the Latter-day Saints know that he will be a future bishop of the Church who will be with the Saints in Zion, Jackson county, Missouri, when the Lord shall establish them in that land." This individual, according to the First Presidency, would be filled with spirit and power to the degree that he

“will be able to set in order the house of God pertaining to the department of the work under his jurisdiction; and in righteousness and justice will ‘arrange by lot the inheritances of the Saints.’” Then, in an effort to rule out the possibility that Joseph Smith or any individual designated to be Church president would be the promised deliverer in the future, they continued that the one mighty and strong would be only a bishop and that “this prophecy does not allude in any way to any President of the Church, past, present, or to come.”¹⁹

The First Presidency had not clarified the identity of the one mighty and strong. Rather they had further muddied the waters. Their letter ambivalently asserted, first, that the one mighty and strong was Bishop Partridge and that he had completed his mission and, second, that this mission might yet be carried out in the future by an unidentified individual who would be only a bishop. The most controversial part of the letter, however, was its report that Orson Pratt had identified Bishop Partridge as the one mighty and strong. Fundamentalists have traditionally responded by citing a discourse delivered by Orson Pratt in the Logan Tabernacle, November 1, 1879, in which he said, speaking of the return to Jackson County:

You may perhaps ask when this time will come? For the Saints to receive Bona fide inheritances. The time will come for the Saints to receive their stewardships, when they shall return to the lands from whence they have been driven; but the inheritances will not be given, until the Lord shall first appoint to the righteous dead their inheritances, and afterwards the righteous living will receive theirs. This you will find recorded in the Doctrine and Covenants; and in the same Book it is predicted that there is to be one “mighty and strong,” as well as to be an immortal personage,—one that is clothed upon with light as a garment:—one whose bowels are a fountain of truth.²⁰

For unknown reasons, the First Presidency not only overlooked Pratt’s November 1, 1879, address, but it also ignored his footnotes to Doctrine and Covenants 85 about the one mighty and strong which had been in print since 1879. For verse 7, Pratt inserted two footnotes which conveyed his belief that the one mighty and strong would be a future immortal personage. The note “g” preceded “send one mighty and strong” and Pratt explained in the footnote: “A future messenger promised.” Note “h” preceded “light for a covering, whose mouth shall utter words, eternal words” and the footnote explained “brilliant and glorious in appearance.”²¹

A representative response to Pratt's alleged comments about Bishop Partridge appeared in *Truth*, a magazine published by fundamentalist Joseph White Musser, in October 1943. Musser explained that extensive searches had failed to locate any article in which Pratt identified Bishop Partridge as the one mighty and strong. He further reasoned that Pratt's footnotes to Doctrine and Covenants 85:7 stated that the one mighty and strong would be "a future messenger" who would be "brilliant and glorious in appearance," making it difficult to believe Pratt made radically different statements "about the time of the death of Brigham Young" (August 29, 1877). Musser concluded:

In light of this information, is it reasonable to suppose that Orson Pratt, Church Historian and as thorough a student as he was, would claim in 1877 that Sec. 85 of the D. & C. had reference to Edward Partridge, then in 1879—two years later—add an explanatory foot-note to the effect that the revelation did not have reference to Edward Partridge, but to a future messenger? Edward Partridge died May 27, 1840, and 39 years later (1879) the foot-note reference to, promising a future messenger, was published and continued to be published until taken out by Dr. Talmage in 1920—41 years later. The facts in this case do not support in the least degree the claim that Orson Pratt made the statement attributed to him.²²

Many fundamentalists agreed with Pratt that the one mighty and strong would be a future immortal personage. This line of reasoning led many to decide that the resurrected Joseph Smith would return and complete the work of "setting in order the house of God." This belief was grounded in the understanding that "Joseph Smith holds all the keys pertaining to the present dispensation" and thereby "holds in his hand the scepter of power." Moreover, a resurrected Joseph Smith would be "clothed with light for a covering" and "his words will be eternal as he is eternal." It was therefore fitting, according to the reasoning of many fundamentalists, because God used Joseph Smith to organize his church and kingdom, for God to also use him to "clean up the mess they are in and set them in order."²³

The belief that Joseph Smith will return as one mighty and strong has not been universally accepted by all fundamentalists. The obvious reason is that, if Smith is to be the one mighty and strong, all other claimants to this title are impostors. For example, Art Bulla, a former Seventy in the LDS Church, who claimed to be the one mighty and strong in the mid-1990s, denied that a resurrected person will be the one mighty and strong. One of his revelations dated May 21, 1995, characterized the belief

that Joseph Smith would be the one mighty and strong as "a fable." It also explained, speaking in the voice of Christ, that "whenever there is a legally constituted administrator of my laws and my gospel in mortality upon the earth that the heavens defer the performance of any duty connected to those in mortality, to that legal administrator upon the earth." The revelation identified Bulla, in his capacity as the one mighty and strong, as God's administrator on the earth.²⁴

Ogden Kraut, a Mormon fundamentalist author and publisher, gave a limited list of individuals in the LDS tradition who claimed they were the one mighty and strong: James Brighthouse, Samuel Eastman, Paul Feil, LeRoy Wilson, John Tanner Clark, Benjamin LeBaron, Joel LeBaron, John Bryant, Elden Hollis, Sherman Russell Lloyd, Frank Miller, Jasper No. 7, Art Bulla, and Alonzo Langford. He then added: "The author is acquainted with many others still living, who claim to have all the keys and authority to put the house of God in order. They are not mentioned because most of them do not want it 'revealed' as yet."²⁵

Kraut's elaboration about ten "of the most interesting" LDS fundamentalists who claimed to be the one mighty and strong in a paper delivered at the August 1991 Sunstone Symposium sheds light upon some of these individuals. For example, Paul Feil, secretary to Samuel Eastman, "believed Sam was the [One] Mighty and Strong. But when Sam died, Paul thought he should take his place. Paul lived on Redwood Road in Salt Lake [City] with a herd of goats. One was named 'Holy Ghost' that was supposed to live through the Millennium. Paul died in an auto accident; the goat died of old age." LeRoy Wilson "set up a colony near Veyo, Utah. He was a genius, an inventor who claimed his inventions would save the economy of the Church. He was shot to death over a mining claim in 1953." Joel LeBaron "was the leader of nearly all of the fundamentalist LeBarons. His group published a series of pamphlets called 'The Ensign,' one of which stated, 'Joel F. LeBaron is the One Mighty and Strong.' ('The Seventies,' p. 6) However, after some disagreements over authority, his brother, Ervil, had Joel killed."²⁶

The number of claimants to the title of the one mighty and strong with whom Kraut was acquainted was large and diverse:

Most of these individuals have been dissenters from the LDS Church, proclaiming their reasons why the Church needed to be set in order; and naturally each has claimed authority to accomplish the task. Usually he claims revelation from God assuring him that he has been "appointed" . . . There

is an admixture of names, titles, and offices under the banner of the One Mighty and Strong. Some claim that all these titles apply to just one person, while others claim that different men will hold the various titles. For example, the scriptures mention the "Root of Jesse" (Isa. 11:10, D&C 113:5-6), "A Man Like Unto Moses" (D&C 103:15-18), the "Marred Servant" (3 Ne. 20:44, D&C 43:4), the "Lamanite Prophet" and the "Indian Messiah" (3 Ne. 21:23-24; D&C 101:55-62).²⁷

Just as there is diversity of thought about the identity of the one mighty and strong among the LDS fundamentalists, historians also differ in their conclusions. For example, in 1962, Duane S. Crowther, an LDS historian who has written extensively about how former and latter-day prophecies will impact the world, concluded: "Many will be given inheritances during this period [the Millennium] on which to dwell. These will be appointed by 'one mighty and strong,' according to the Doctrine and Covenants."²⁸

In his 1974 dissertation, Robert J. Woodford cited a passage from Edward Partridge's journal, obviously written by someone else after Partridge's death, which identifies Partridge as the one mighty and strong: "At his [Partridge's] funeral says mother Partridge John E. Page, speaking and referring to the revelation, predicting the rising up of one who should be mighty, who should divide the inheritances to the saints, and said he did not know but the one should be Bishop Partridge. The Prophet Joseph spoke up and said he was the one referred to."²⁹

In 1977, Duane S. Crowther again chose to disagree with the 1905 First Presidency statement and explained in depth why Jesus Christ will be the one mighty and strong:

"One mighty and strong," probably the Savior himself, will come to the New Jerusalem to set in order the house of God and to arrange by lot the inheritances of the saints. He may be counteracting the influence of the son of perdition who will sit in the temple of God. One called of God will put forth his hand "to steady the ark of God" and be struck down. Apostates will be denied inheritances in the new Zion, which seems to indicate that these events will transpire relatively early in the New Jerusalem era.³⁰

In 1985, Lyndon W. Cook cited a January 1, 1834, letter from Oliver Cowdery to John Whitmer which provided a different identification of the individual who is to "steady the ark of God." Cowdery quoted the Prophet as saying: "[It] does not mean that any one had at the time, but it was given for a caution to those in high standing to be ware, least they should fall by the shaft of death."³¹ In 1999, H. Michael Marquardt inter-

preted the crucial verse 7, with its reference to the one mighty and strong, as referring to Joseph Smith while the ark-steadier in verse 8 was a reference to Bishop Partridge.³²

This pattern of disagreeing with the 1905 First Presidency over the identity of the one mighty and strong continued in 2004 when two Brigham Young University educators, Stephen E. Robinson and H. Dean Garrett, in a volume published by Deseret Book, identified him as Jesus Christ and argued that “the idea proposed by some” that the one mighty and strong would arrive on the scene prior to Christ’s second advent “is incorrect.” In clarifying their thesis, they explained that, following the Savior’s return and establishment of his kingdom, he could be thought of as a “millennial presiding bishop.”³³

The following year, two other LDS scholars, Timothy G. Merrill and Steven C. Harper, supported the 1905 First Presidency interpretation, declaring that their pronouncement “became the definitive statement on the meaning of verses 7 and 8 and later formed the bedrock for all future commentary written upon the subject.” Rather puzzlingly, they then added, “The Presidency did not believe, however, that their analysis of verses 7 and 8 was either comprehensive or final.” Merrill and Harper attribute the ambiguity of Section 85 to the imperfection of language, asserting: “Scriptural language is saturated with the Spirit, and the meaning can be diluted by careless readings, intellectual curiosity, or excessive commentary.”³⁴

The One Mighty and Strong and the RLDS

In the RLDS tradition, the doctrine of the one mighty and strong has gone through three stages: first, an association with the first president of the RLDS Church, Joseph Smith III; second, a cautious and uncertain tendency to associate the one mighty and strong with Jesus Christ; and third, a resurgence of the term among dissenters following the radical reorganization of the RLDS Church into the renamed Community of Christ.

The ordination of Joseph Smith III on April 6, 1860, to the presidency of the Reorganized Church was the culmination of efforts by dissenters, largely from the organizations of James J. Strang and William Smith, to facilitate the reorganization of the Church with a son of Joseph Smith Jr. at its head. Some of these dissenters, often referred to as the New Organization, had tirelessly worked for a decade to bring about this reor-

ganization. A signature event in their early history was a conference held at Palestine, Illinois, on October 8, 1851, in which William Smith, the only surviving brother of Joseph Smith Jr., was rejected as the Church leader when the attendees became aware he was advocating or practicing polygamy. One of the participants, Jason W. Briggs, returned to his home near Beloit, Wisconsin, and sought divine guidance through fasting and prayer. A month later, according to Briggs, he received a vision which confirmed William Smith's rejection by God and contained the promise that "in mine [God's] due time will I call upon the seed of Joseph Smith, and will bring forth one mighty and strong and he shall preside over the high priesthood of my church."³⁵ If this revelatory experience signified that Joseph Smith III or one of his brothers would be the one mighty and strong, it missed the mark as other references to that effect are rare or nonexistent prior to 1865. In fact, in March 1862 the RLDS newspaper, the *True Latter Day Saints' Herald*, printed the portion of the November 27, 1832, letter from Joseph Smith Jr. to W. W. Phelps about the one mighty and strong without comment.³⁶ The failure of the editor, Jason W. Briggs, to explicitly identify the one mighty and strong with Joseph Smith III is surprising in that members of the New Organization and the early RLDS universally believed that God had rejected Joseph Smith's original Church because of the excesses of false leaders like Brigham Young, James J. Strang, James C. Brewster, and William Smith.³⁷ Such a rejection implied that a restoration was necessary, and it would have been logical for members of the New Organization to loudly proclaim that a son of Joseph Smith Jr. would be the one mighty and strong and equally logical for early RLDS missionaries to announce in unison that Joseph Smith III, in his capacity as the one mighty and strong, was "setting in order the house of God."

Regardless, from 1865 onward, frequent references to Young Joseph as the one mighty and strong appear. RLDS elder Thomas Job was apparently making that association in October 1865 when he told an LDS congregation: "For the Lord's covenant was to raise up unto His people a man . . . even as Moses was; a man mighty and strong, such a man as young Joseph Smith is, and a mightier man you can not meet with."³⁸ "Watchman" (a pseudonym) unquestionably identified Joseph III as the one mighty and strong in a front-page article of the *True Latter Day Saints' Herald* in early 1870. After explaining that "Election is predicated upon the foreknowledge of God" and that God "foresees and foreknows what persons will do while working out their probation," the author wrote:

God foreknew the character of sister Emma [Smith]—that she would be faithful and true to him who had called her—and he *elect*ed her to be the mother of the successor of the Martyr—the ‘one mighty and strong,’ who is “to set in order the *house* of God [i.e., the Church; see 1 Tim. 3:15, 1 Pet. 4:17, Heb. 3:6,] and arrange by lot the inheritances of the saints;” the “man who shall lead them [the Saints] like as Moses led the children of Israel,” [which was by direct revelation from God,] and who, when sent of God, would find the saints in “bondage,” from which they should be “led out” “by power” [of God], “and with a stretched out arm.” See D&C 101:3.³⁹

In January 1880, William W. Blair, then a member of the RLDS First Presidency, took it upon himself to explain Joseph Smith III’s connection with the one mighty and strong. Being led by “impressions” of the Holy Spirit, he concluded that verses 6–8 in section 85 were a prophecy by Joseph Smith about his newborn son and successor, which designated him to be the future one mighty and strong. Furthermore, Blair said the Reorganized Church was founded on the “grand revelation” of the one mighty and strong.⁴⁰ Blair announced to his RLDS audience:

. . . that the prophecy itself was *incidental in the letter*; that it was *originally* given to *Joseph himself* rather than *through* Joseph to the Church *through* Phelps; that the *prophecy* of the “one mighty and strong” did not *directly* concern those *then* in Jackson county, but rather people who to this day have not set their foot in Jackson county—the *children*, rather than their fathers;—and that the mission foreshadowed related to his son Joseph, who, like his father, should be sent in the spirit of the “one mighty and strong” to *restore* the “house of God” to “*order*” after it shall have been ruled *out of order* and the fathers plucked up out of the land of Zion because of their iniquities. Numerous other prophecies and revelations may be compared to corroborate this, and the *facts* of history to this day confirm this view. Moreover it would seem that the prophecy of the “one mighty and strong” was not *originally* given on the 27th of November, 1832, but was probably given nearer the birth of “Young Joseph” and about the 6th of November. Since that time the Spirit had pursued the Prophet with the burden of his son’s mission, for mark—history itself proves it was not his *own* mission, which also proves that it was not a revelation “concerning” the Saints *then* in Jackson county, and strangely suggests that the prophecy was incidental in that letter to Phelps by the very law of association which connected with his son.⁴¹

Fourteen months earlier, Blair had written in the October 1878 *Saints’ Advocate*: “We have shown that the Church was rejected of God because of transgression, and thus the ‘house of God’ became disordered.

We have also noticed the promise of one being sent to 'set it in order.'"⁴² In March and November 1883, Blair told the readers of the *Saints' Advocate* that, since Young Joseph's calling and ordination in 1860, he "has been setting the house of God in order."⁴³

In November 1885, the new editor of the *Saints' Advocate*, Joseph Luff, made a dramatic appeal to the Utah Saints to accept Joseph Smith III as their leader. As noted above, Luff first explained that RLDS members had heard publicly and privately that Utah Saints were expecting the one mighty and strong to begin a healing ministry in Utah and deliver them from their "bondage." Then Luff artfully explained that the "deliverer of Latter Day Israel" had for years been quietly going about the work of establishing unity and peace among the Latter Day Saints. Indicating that many had prayed for the coming of the one mighty and strong, he advised the Utah Mormons that "by returning to the former paths they will again realize the former glory." The appeal ended with Luff appearing to hedge his bets by asserting the RLDS leader's primacy regardless of whether he was to be recognized as the one mighty or strong or as the instrument by which the one mighty and strong would effect his restoration: "And if in the developments of time and patient toil it shall be revealed that in "young Joseph" are the essential elements of "one mighty and strong," you shall from his hand receive your inheritances; and if he be found but an instrument in the hands of God to "prepare the way" for the coming of that Mighty deliverer, by making his paths straight, you will be the better prepared for His advent."⁴⁴

During the last few years of the nineteenth century, the second phase of RLDS formulation of the doctrine of the one mighty and strong was clearly evident as representatives of the RLDS Church and the Church of Christ, or Hedrickites, attempted to agree on doctrinal issues in preparation for the union of their organizations. The Church of Christ, often called the Church of Christ (Temple Lot) to distinguish it from larger Protestant denominations, was composed of some fifty to a hundred followers of Granville Hedrick. The April 1900 RLDS general conference received a report issued by representatives of that organization which retracted a prior firm declaration that the one mighty and strong must be identified as Jesus Christ. They substituted a resolution apparently more palatable to their RLDS confreres, which cautiously asserted the utility of such a belief.

The Elders of the Church of Christ presented the following as received by them previous to the meeting of the joint council:

The teachings of the Spirit unto the elders of the Church of Christ is that the acceptance of the belief that Jesus Christ is the One Mighty and Strong, will mightily move the cause of Zion and assist in a solution of the differences that have long existed between the people of God. (Signed by the committee)

The RLDS report on the same issue took a slightly different yet similarly cautious stand on the identity of the one mighty and strong:

Whereas, we have received no divine communication authorizing any particular interpretation of the revelation before us; and as the Reorganized Church has never taken action upon the matter;

Resolved, that we leave it an open question, to be decided as God may develop his purposes among us, while we acknowledge the leading features in it to be prominently characteristic of Jesus Christ. (Signed on behalf of said committee by chairman and secretary)⁴⁵

Joseph Smith III took a pragmatic approach, neither affirming nor denying that he was the one mighty and strong from his ordination as RLDS president in 1860 until after the 1900 general conference. As information in RLDS Church publications identified him as the one mighty and strong, John R. Haldeman, editor of the Church of Christ *The Evening and Morning Star* commented in September 1900: "Joseph Smith, president of the Reorganization, has not made a definite claim to the title [one mighty and strong]; yet he has permitted literature to be issued from the Reorganized publishing house wherein the claim is definitely made for him."⁴⁶ In February 1901, Haldeman observed that, since the Latter-day Saints and the Reorganized Latter Day Saints claimed to be fully organized, the one mighty and strong would not come to them as they had no need to be "set in order." However, as the Church of Christ was in a disorganized condition, they "could welcome his labor with perfect consistency, since it is a part of their belief that the church is out of order and needs regulation."⁴⁷

Four years later, in response to a question about the identity of the one mighty and strong, Smith reviewed in the *Saints' Herald* the resolutions of the RLDS and Church of Christ committees relating to the one mighty and strong at the 1900 general conference. He correctly noted: "No action of conference was had upon this report," then explained that "interpretation" of the revelation might occur in the future and that attempts to identify the one mighty and strong "have been conjectural, re-

quiring tissues of affirmation, argument, and reasoning to give support to them."⁴⁸

In addition to calling a halt to speculation about this personage's identity, Smith continued to remain disengaged from the issue. He stated in a 1905 letter: "I do not personally claim to be 'the one mighty and strong.'"⁴⁹ The following year, he explained to another correspondent: "I am not prepared to state who the 'one mighty and strong' is; that is, who he is in person. There has been much speculation about and some have affirmed and defended by evidences and arguments that I was the one. This I neither affirm, nor deny; for this reason, I believe that the statement in the letter to Phelps has been much over estimated in importance."⁵⁰

In the fall of 1908, Smith published a sharply worded editorial criticizing the members of the Church of Christ for charging that his father had failed to "set in order the house of God." This failure, according to members of the Church of Christ, meant that the one mighty and strong would be required to "complete the work which Joseph failed to do." Smith charged that members of the Church of Christ were "confessing their own sins and shortcomings" when they acknowledged they were desirous to be set in order by the one mighty and strong. Then, after acknowledging it would be unlikely for someone other than Jesus Christ to be the one mighty and strong, Smith said his church had "taken no ground" about the identity of this individual.⁵¹

The *Saints' Herald* of June 5, 1912, contained a warning by Elbert A. Smith, Joseph Smith III's nephew who was then a counselor in the First Presidency, titled "A Word of Caution Regarding Candidates to the Position of 'The One Mighty and Strong.'" Smith said he had been approached recently by "a number of our men who are aspiring to very high position"—namely, that of being the one mighty and strong, a claim that "astonished" him. Smith reasoned that only one could be this deliverer and that, therefore, all the rest were deceived. He found in the announcement itself evidence for eliminating such claimants, for surely "the individual called of God to do such a great work would be discreet enough and in possession of sufficient saving common sense to keep his own counsel and wait for God to move in the matter and reveal in proper ways the one so called." Suggesting that even the claimants of pure character and integrity are "victims of auto-suggestion," he insightfully observed:

It is possible for one to brood over a certain idea until he becomes dominated by it and is in fact a monomaniac. Constant dwelling on one theme

and upon one plan of operation may at last lead one to believe that it is the only solution to existing problems, and that he is the one divinely appointed to put it into execution; and so he may come to identify himself with some prophetic character that is to appear in time and do great things. . . . It is needless to say that along this road of suggestion and auto-suggestion lies the way toward insanity. It is a dangerous path.⁵²

Throughout the mid-decades of the twentieth century, the historical record is generally silent about the one mighty and strong in the RLDS tradition. That changed with a number of traumatic events which shook the church following the ordination of W. Wallace Smith in 1978 as Church president. A generation of Church leaders who had attended Protestant religious seminaries⁵³ replaced conservative members of the hierarchy, educational system, and *Saints' Herald* staff. This shift of power to men with more moderate beliefs forever changed the RLDS Church. Church leaders and educators deemphasized the sacredness of the Book of Mormon or even questioned its validity as scripture. Similarly, they questioned the belief that Zion would be reestablished in Jackson County. A key belief in lineal descent (that the president must be a direct descendant of Joseph Smith Jr.) was forever shattered in April 1996 when W. Grant McMurray became Church president.⁵⁴ The most important single event in the factionalizing of the RLDS, however, was the ordination of women to the priesthood in 1984. William D. Russell, a professor at Graceland University and an authority on the changing RLDS Church, wrote in 1991:

There were only a few small fundamentalist groups meeting outside the authority of the institutional church when Wallace B. Smith announced his revelation permitting the ordination of women in 1984. For many fundamentalists this was the last straw. To their way of thinking the gospel is unchangeable. They argued that no women had been called before, and therefore it was obvious that God did not want them in the priesthood.

In the years since the women's ordination revelation was announced, many separatist branches and congregations have been organized. At the present time I have identified more than 200 independent local groups in thirty-two states, Canada, and Australia. Fifty-five of these groups are in Missouri, many in the Independence area. Other states with large numbers of such groups are Michigan, Oklahoma, and Texas.⁵⁵

It is against this background of reassessment and change that many RLDS fundamentalists longed for a deliverer to be sent by God to "set in order the house of God." Richard Price,⁵⁶ a leader of the independent

fundamentalist churches who was excommunicated from the RLDS Church in 1987, expressed this sentiment:

But after Joseph [Smith III]'s death, the Church was again "held captive a long season." Her "captors" were [and are] as before the Church leaders. They brought in supreme directional control and the present liberal Apostasy. They have "degraded and dishonored her" by rejecting the precious distinctives of the Restoration Movement. Today she is again in a "pitiable condition." But just as Christ intervened to cleanse his only true Church after the 1844-1860 Apostasy by sending a true prophet, He will send another prophet who will give the guidance and power that is needed.⁵⁷

According to William Russell, Price proposed this strategy: "Faithful Saints should withdraw from participation [in a liberally controlled congregation] and establish an 'Independent Restoration Branch' controlled by local elders who were ordained by proper authority and who adhered to the traditional RLDS doctrines."⁵⁸ Efforts by Price and others to keep independent fundamentalist churches from formally organizing, however, have been largely unsuccessful. In May 2002, Price lamented that thirteen churches "had been organized since the Liberal Apostasy began." Among those claiming that God had called them as prophets were Eugene Walton, Robert Baker, and Marcus Juby. Price also said that each of these individuals "claims that his church is the true successor of the RLDS Church."⁵⁹

The most crushing blow to the independent fundamentalists, however, was the establishment of the Remnant Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints in April 2000. The inspired statement which authorized the formation of that church was printed in the May 2000 issue of its newspaper, *Hastening Times*. Among its instructions was this statement: "Be faithful little flock, and in My time I will send you one mighty and strong, again, to be your President, Prophet, Seer, and Revelator."⁶⁰ After the calling and ordination of seven men as apostles on September 23, 2000, the Church was fully organized after Frederick Niels Larsen received a revelation given "by the voice of inspiration" which called him to be the "President of the High Priesthood and President of my Church in these last days." He was ordained to that office on April 6, 2002.⁶¹ This church presently has a membership of about a thousand persons in seventeen branches.⁶²

Larsen is a son of President Frederick M. Smith's daughter, Lois Smith Larsen. (Fred M., a son of Joseph III, was second president of the

RLDS Church.) He claims the office by divine calling and the doctrine of lineal descent. This claim has not set well with the independent fundamentalists who chose not to unite under the leadership of Larsen. Richard Price discounts the legitimacy of Larsen's ordination because "priesthood lineage does not descend from mother to son, but rather from father to son." Furthermore, Price concludes: "The revelation in Joseph's letter to W. W. Phelps could not apply to Larsen, or any other man, because the wording of it bears evidence that it is describing Christ. It is undoubtedly referring to Christ, as the One Mighty and Strong, for only He can set in order the house of God—and only He has the right to give the Saints their inheritances in Zion. Christ has promised that He will build Zion, which includes assigning inheritances there."⁶³

Conclusions

Mormonism is a religion with the core belief that God communicates with his chosen people by revelation. Furthermore, even though it has been a fundamental belief that the prophet receives revelation for the Church, it is also a fact the membership has carefully monitored the prophet's behavior and teaching to see if they are acceptable to the members. When leaders are perceived to have strayed from the truth, members often accuse them of being rejected by God and announcing that a restoration of "true" principles must take place. This process of rejection and restoration has been, and will continue to be, spearheaded by individuals claiming divine authority from God to purify and stand at the head of the institutional church. If the Church leader cannot be overthrown, the strategy usually is to convert members from the institutional church into an alternate "true church."

It was logical for RLDS stalwarts to introduce the one mighty and strong into their struggles with rival Mormon factions and to claim that Joseph Smith III was "setting in order the house of God." Smith pragmatically encouraged this belief by his silence, and this polemic process continued until RLDS and Church of Christ negotiators agreed that the prophecy about the one mighty and strong probably referred to a future mission of Jesus Christ. Ironically, some hundred years later, fundamentalists in the Remnant Church claim that the RLDS Church/Community of Christ is being set in order by the one mighty and strong.

The LDS Church had to cope with RLDS claims that Joseph Smith III was the one mighty and strong for four decades and should have been

able to respond meaningfully to this fundamentalist critique. Inexplicably, the 1905 pronouncement by the First Presidency about the one mighty and strong was so flawed it had the opposite effect. After saying that individuals who claimed to be the one mighty and strong and their supporters were not very smart, the First Presidency set forth an "authoritative" Church position on the subject which was both contradictory and confusing. However, the part that was the most damaging to their argument was their apparently fictional claim that Orson Pratt had delivered a discourse about the time of Brigham Young's death which identified Bishop Partridge as the one mighty and strong. When this undocumented assertion was compared with documented Pratt statements which said that the one mighty and strong would be a future immortal being, the credibility of the LDS leaders suffered and their adversarial relationship with the fundamentalists intensified.

The century following the First Presidency's message has seen a considerable number of men in the LDS tradition who have claimed to be one mighty and strong. Typically, they were obscure individuals who made little impact before dying along with their visions, prophecies, and revelations. Most were relatively harmless, but some have been mentally unstable and have exercised unjust dominion over their followers and, in some cases, their innocent victims.

In spite of all the speculation about the one mighty and strong, the weight of evidence suggests the references to this individual or individuals in Joseph Smith's November 27, 1832, letter to William W. Phelps were never considered to be a revelatory message to the Church. Apparently, the primary participants in this drama—Joseph Smith, William W. Phelps, and Edward Partridge—considered the information about the one mighty and strong to refer to events in Zion in late 1832 or early 1833. After that time, it was not an issue for them. If this explanation is correct, all of the past, present, and future speculation about the one mighty and strong has been and will be in vain. This line of reasoning leads me to generally agree with H. Michael Marquardt that Joseph Smith Jr. considered himself to be the one mighty and strong and that Bishop Edward Partridge was the individual who was warned against putting "forth his hand to steady the ark of God."

It is difficult to generalize about many topics relating to Mormon history. It is safe, however, to assume that numerous individuals will continue to claim the role of being the one mighty and strong and that some

of these “strong ones” will misuse their followers. Another certainty is that Church leaders will continue to vigorously defend themselves against would-be “deliverers” who tell Church members that the leaders are apostate and God has sent them to take their place.

Personal Epilogue: Observations of a Strangite

As a member of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints (Strangite), I find it relevant to mention that this organization, currently with a membership of roughly one hundred persons, had a disastrous experience with an ex-member who claimed to be the one mighty and strong in the mid-1970s. This schismatic experience resulted in the excommunication of roughly one-third of the then-active membership, split families, and seriously damaged the small church.

Individual Strangites, like members in the other Mormon factions, continue to speculate about the identity of the one mighty and strong. Some cite the undated statement made by Apostle L. D. Hickey, the last surviving apostle of James J. Strang, that Strang was the one mighty and strong: “The man referred to in that Revelation to Joseph in 1831 [1832] (regarding the one mighty and strong) was J. J. Strang. I saw the scepter in his hand—and felt its power. James J. Strang was the one mighty and strong, and he held a scepter in his litteral [sic] hand—just as Joseph [Smith] said.”⁶⁴ An opposing interpretation about the one mighty and strong was set forth in 1915 by Wingfield Watson, the Presiding High Priest of the Strangites, which repudiated the teachings of the Church of Christ and the Reorganized Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints that the one mighty and strong would be Jesus Christ. Instead, Watson taught that the one mighty and strong would be a future prophet of the tribe of Judah.⁶⁵

Some Strangites look to the past to examine the components of righteousness that they believe their church once exclusively possessed and, at the same time, expect that God will redeem and elevate their church to similar or greater heights in the future.

Notes

1. “Let Every Man Learn His Duty,” *The Evening and the Morning Star* 1 (January 1833): 5.

2. This closing was published as part of the letter’s appearance in “Brother William W. Phelps,” *Times and Seasons* 5 (October 15, 1844): 673–74 and “History of Joseph Smith,” *Millennial Star* 14 (June 26, 1852): 284–85. The closing was

cut, however, from Phelps's version printed in the *Evening and Mormon Star* as "Let Every Man Learn His Duty," 5. The LDS official history introduced the letter in this manner: "In answer to letters received from the brethren in Missouri, I wrote as follows . . ." Joseph Smith Jr. et al., *History of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints*, edited by B. H. Roberts, 2d ed. rev. (6 vols. 1902–12, Vol. 7 1932; reprinted, Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1976 printing): 1:297. Three pages later the history explained: "On the 6th of December 1832, I received the following revelation explaining the parable of the wheat and tares . . ." *Ibid.*, 300. In other words, the verses relating to the one mighty and strong in the November 27, 1832, letter may not have been a traditional revelation to the Church. Joseph Smith evidently intended to convey revelatory direction, however, because of its divine attribution: "thus saith the still small voice" and "I the Lord God will send . . ." (vv. 6–7).

3. The genesis of the term "one mighty and strong" is presumably Isaiah 28:2–3: "Behold, the Lord hath a mighty and strong one, which as a tempest of hail and a destroying storm, as a flood of mighty waters overflowing, shall cast down to the earth with the hand. The crown of pride, the drunkards of Ephraim, shall be trodden under feet."

4. RLDS fundamentalists or restorationists generally want the Church to be restored to the level of purity it enjoyed under the leadership of Joseph Smith Jr. and Joseph Smith III. William D. Russell, an authority on the fragmentation of the Reorganization, used the phrase "Old School Saints" to describe the fundamentalists or restorationists. William D. Russell, "The Remnant Church: An RLDS Schismatic Group Finds a Prophet of Joseph's Seed," *Dialogue: A Journal of Mormon Thought* 38 (Fall 2005): 75–106.

5. Phelps died on March 7, 1872, thirty-three years before the 1905 First Presidency issued their "authoritative" interpretation about the one mighty and strong.

6. W. W. Phelps, Letter to Brigham Young, May 6, 1881, holograph, Brigham Young Papers, Archives, Family and Church History Department, Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, Salt Lake City (hereafter LDS Church Archives), emphasis his.

7. After presiding for three years as president of the Quorum of the Twelve, John Taylor officially became the third president of the LDS Church on October 10, 1880, and died on July 25, 1887. Wilford Woodford was sustained as LDS Church president on April 7, 1889, and served until his death on September 2, 1898.

8. George Q. Cannon, October 29, 1882, *Journal of Discourses*, 26 vols. (London and Liverpool: LDS Booksellers Depot, 1855–86), 33:358–59.

9. Joseph Luff, "Mighty and Strong," *Saints' Advocate* 8 (November 1885): 587.
10. Lyle O. Wright, "Origins and Development of the Church of the First-born of the Fulness of Times" (M.S. thesis, Brigham Young University, 1963), 30–33.
11. *Ibid.*, 34.
12. See the accompanying article by Brian C. Hales, "John T. Clark: The One Mighty and Strong," in this issue.
13. Minutes of the First Council of the Seventy, November 8, 1905, D. Michael Quinn Papers, Beinecke Library, Yale University, New Haven, Connecticut; original in LDS Church Archives.
14. LDS fundamentalist historian Ogden Kraut said that Brigham H. Roberts was the author of the one mighty and strong document and that it was published with the First Presidency as the authors. Ogden Kraut, *The One Mighty and Strong* (Salt Lake City: Pioneer Press, 1961), 31–32.
15. Quoted in Jean Bickmore White, ed., *Church, State, and Politics: The Diaries of John Henry Smith* (Salt Lake City: Signature Books in association with Smith Research Associates, 1990), 556.
16. This message is most easily located in James R. Clark, *Messages of the First Presidency*, 6 vols. (Salt Lake City: Bookcraft, 1965–75), 4:107–21. It was originally printed as "One Mighty and Strong" in the *Deseret Evening News*, November 11, 1905, 4, and reprinted under the same title in the *Deseret Semi-Weekly News* on November 13, 1905, and in the *Improvement Era* 10 (October 1907): 929–43.
17. Clark, *Messages of the First Presidency*, 4:108. Members of the LDS hierarchy have episodically followed the lead of the 1905 Presidency and attacked fundamentalists who claim to be the one mighty and strong and their supporters. For example, in 1969 Joseph Fielding Smith, then Church historian and a member of the First Presidency, said that Doctrine and Covenants 85:6–8 has caused "no end of needless speculation due to a misunderstanding of what is written." He also aggressively charged: "There have arisen from time to time men of doubtful intelligence who have laid claim to being the 'one mighty and strong.' Some of these, notwithstanding their limitations of intellect and power of understanding, have succeeded in gathering around them a few followers of like spirit and lack of understanding." Quoted in *ibid.*, 107.
18. Clark, *Messages of the First Presidency*, 117.
19. *Ibid.*, 108–20. Samuel Eastman called the First Presidency's directive about the one mighty and strong a "sham prophetic epistle" and lamented that it was published "a few days before I was brought to trial before the church courts." As a result, he felt it "prejudiced the church courts against me so that it was impossible for me to be heard in my own defense before them, so as to receive an honest

and impartial trial at their hands." Quoted in Wright, "Origins and Development of the Church of the First Born," 34.

20. Orson Pratt, November 1, 1879, *Journal of Discourses*, 21:150–51. Pratt also expressed his belief that Joseph Smith, as a resurrected personage, might be sent to lead the Mormons back to Independence, Missouri, shortly before the "winding up scene." March 9, 1873, *Journal of Discourses* 15:363.

21. Pratt's footnotes about the one mighty and strong were deleted from the 1921 edition of the Doctrine and Covenants. However the footnotes in Section 85 in the editions from 1921 to 1980 skip from "f" to "i" and the absence of footnotes "g" and "h" shows where Pratt's original footnotes had been. The 1981 Doctrine and Covenants uses a different system of footnoting and does not comment on this question.

22. Musser, "The 'One Mighty and Strong,'" *Truth* 9 (October 1943): 117.

23. *Ibid.*, 118. See also Musser, "The One Mighty and Strong," *Truth* 14 (August 1948): 69–72; Musser, "Who Is the 'One Mighty and Strong?'" *Truth* 16 (October 1950): 130–34; and Kraut, *The One Mighty and Strong*, 101–11.

24. "Revelation from the Lord to Art Bulla on Why the One Mighty and Strong Cannot be a Resurrected Being as Taught by Such Men As Ogden Kraut (and others of the willfully blind who attempt to lead the blind that they both have fallen into the ditch together)," BX 8608 A1 no. 3903, L. Tom Perry Special Collections, Harold B. Lee Library, Brigham Young University, Provo, Utah, Archives and Manuscripts Department. Bulla maintains a website: <http://www.artbulla.com/zion/about.htm>.

25. Kraut, *One Mighty and Strong*, 91–99.

26. Ogden Kraut, "The One Mighty and Strong," 10–11, paper presented at the Sunstone Symposium, Salt Lake City, August 1991; photocopy in my possession.

27. Kraut, *The One Mighty and Strong*, 84–85; form of scripture citations standardized. Kraut acknowledged that his not accepting the "Mighties and Strongs" has been "stressful, and even life-threatening." He gave his opinion that some of these individuals are "prone to mental disorders" and listed five somewhat overlapping reasons why these "super prophets" claimed to be the one mighty and strong: (1) They have done something that makes them susceptible to the influence of false and delusive spirits. (2) They desire the "scepter of Power" promised to accompany that servant. (3) They have become bitter and want to retaliate against the Church because they were mistreated or excommunicated (4). By rejecting the revelations of God, they open themselves up to receive revelations from the devil. (5) Some men are prophets of the devil (99–100).

28. Duane S. Crowther, *Prophecy: Key to the Future* (Salt Lake City: Bookcraft, 1962), 253–55. Strangely, in a footnote Crowther quotes most of the 1905 explanation by the First Presidency about the one mighty and strong and, in

the text, quotes Orson Pratt's November 1, 1879, discourse describing the one mighty and strong as a future immortal personage.

29. Quoted in Robert J. Woodford, "The Historical Development of the Doctrine and Covenants," 3 vols. (Ph.D. diss., Brigham Young University, 1974), 2:1083.

30. Duane S. Crowther, *Prophetic Warnings to Modern America* (Bountiful, Utah: Horizon Publishers and Distributors, 1977), 257–58.

31. Lyndon W. Cook, *The Revelations of the Prophet Joseph Smith* (Salt Lake City: Deseret Books, 1985), 178–79.

32. H. Michael Marquardt, *The Joseph Smith Revelations: Text and Commentary* (Salt Lake City: Signature Books, 1999), 219–20.

33. Stephen E. Robinson and H. Dean Garrett, *A Commentary on the Doctrine and Covenants*, 3 vols. (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 2004), 3:73–74.

34. Timothy G. Merrill and Steven C. Harper, "It Maketh My Bones to Quake': Teaching Doctrine and Covenants 85," *Religious Educator* 6 (2005): 85.

35. "History of the Reorganization of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints," *The Messenger* 2 (November 1875): 49. See also Roger D. Launius, *Joseph Smith III: Pragmatic Prophet* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1988), 84–85.

36. "One Mighty and Strong," *The True Latter Day Saints' Herald* 9 (March 1862): 215–16. The portion of Smith's November 27, 1832, letter to Phelps about the one mighty and strong was never canonized by the RLDS Church but was, however, quoted in its official history without comment. Joseph Smith III and Heman Hale Smith, *History of the Reorganized Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints, 1805–1890*, 4 vols. (continued by F. Henry Edwards as *The History of the Reorganized Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints*, Vols. 5–8) (Independence: Herald House, 1897–1903, 1967 printing), 1:259–60.

37. See *True Latter Day Saints' Herald* articles: "The Keys," 10 (May 15, 1869): 289–93 and "The Rejection of the Church," 17 (October 1, 1870): 577–82. See *Saints' Advocate* articles: "The Latter Day Apostasy," 1 (July 1878): 2–5; "Rejection and Succession," 1 (October 1878): 25–31; "The Remnant," 4 (November 1881): 137–41; "The Successor," 5 (March 1883): 289–94; "The Rejection of the Church," 6 (November 1883): 377–83.

38. Thomas Job, "Captivity and Redemption of Zion," *True Latter Day Saints Herald* 8 (December 15, 1865): 180–81. A similar example is a letter from W. Nosredna ("Anderson" backwards) in "Who Then Shall Preach!," *True Latter Day Saints' Herald* 19 (March 15, 1872): 173: "Joseph [III], the one mighty and strong holding the scepter of power in his hand, to set the house of God in order, and arrange by lot the inheritance of the saints; brought this key of revelation and mystery, and on the sixth day of April, 1860, did commence his great and noble work . . ."

39. Watchman (pseud.), "The Elect Lady," *True Latter Day Saints' Herald* 17 (February 1, 1870): 66; emphasis his, scriptural citations standardized.

40. W. W. Blair, "The One Mighty and Strong," *Saints' Advocate* 2 (January 1880): 79.

41. *Ibid.*, 74, emphasis Blair's. Edward W. Tullidge included this long thesis in *Life of Joseph the Prophet* (Plano, Ill.: Board of Publication of the Reorganized Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints, 1880), 802-27. Tullidge printed Blair's account without acknowledging its authorship.

42. W. W. Blair, "Rejection and Succession," *Saints' Advocate* 1 (October 1878): 30.

43. William W. Blair, "The Successor," *Saints' Advocate* 5 (March 1883): 293; and "The Rejection of the Church," *Saints' Advocate* 6 (November 1883): 386. In his 1892 debate with Wingfield Watson, a Strangite elder, Blair said: "Since that time he has been setting the house of God in order, pouring in the oil and binding up the wounds; and he has thus overcome prejudice, removed reproach and brought honor to the church." W. J. Smith, ed. and comp., *The Watson-Blair Debate* (Clifford, Ont.: Printed for W. J. Smith by Glad Tidings Office, 1898), 179.

44. Luff, "Mighty and Strong," 587-91.

45. "Minutes of General Conference, 1900," *Supplement to the Saints' Herald* (Independence: Herald House, 1900): 180-83.

46. John R. Haldeman, "The One Mighty and Strong," *The Evening and Morning Star* 1 (September 15, 1900): 2.

47. *Ibid.*, 1-2.

48. Joseph Smith III, "Query and Reply," *Saints' Herald* 51 (January 1904): 26-27.

49. Joseph Smith III, Letter to James C. Hambleton, February 1, 1895, Joseph Smith III Letter Book 6, p. 1, Community of Christ Library-Archives, Independence.

50. Joseph Smith III, Letter to James A. Hedrick, April 28, 1896, *ibid.*, 6:386.

51. "Editorial. The Three Books: and the One Mighty and Strong," *Saints' Herald* 55 (October 28, 1908): 1,033-35.

52. Elbert A. Smith, "A Word of Caution Regarding Candidates to the Position of 'The One Mighty and Strong,'" *Saints' Herald* 59 (June 5, 1912): 535-36.

53. W. B. "Pat" Spillman, a former Community of Christ bishop and current editor of the *John Whitmer Historical Association Journal*, concluded: "It is widely agreed that the influence of higher education in the late 1960s played a major role in laying the groundwork for the specific events that pointed the church beyond its sectarian past and toward the direction of mainstream Protestant Christianity. It is the thesis of this paper that the institution that con-

tributed more to this change than any other was St. Paul School of Theology in Kansas City, Missouri." Spillman, "Taking the Road More Traveled," *John Whitmer Historical Association Journal* 24 (2004): 135.

54. Among many references to the ordination of a person not of the Smith lineage as Church president, see Adam Mueller, "Lineal Priesthood," *John Whitmer Historical Association Journal* 24 (2004): 93–110.

55. William D. Russell, "The Fundamentalist Schism, 1958–Present," in *Let Contention Cease*, edited by Roger D. Launius and W. B. "Pat" Spillman, (Independence: Graceland/Park Press, 1991), 134. In addition to articles in *Let Contention Cease*, information about schism in the RLDS Church includes: Richard P. Howard, "The Evolving RLDS Identity," *John Whitmer Historical Association Journal* 14 (1994): 3–10; W. B. "Pat" Spillman, "Adjustment or Apostasy? The Reorganized Church in the Late Twentieth Century," *Journal of Mormon History* 20 (Fall 1994): 1–15; Roger D. Launius, "Coming of Age? The Reorganized Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints in the 1960s," *Dialogue: A Journal of Mormon Thought* 20 (Summer 1995): 31–57; Roger D. Launius, "The Reorganized Church, the Decade of Decision, and the Abilene Paradox," *Dialogue: A Journal of Mormon Thought* 31 (Spring 1998): 47–65; Russell, "The Remnant Church," 75–106.

56. For information about Richard Price and the independent fundamentalist movement, see William D. Russell, "Richard Price: Leading Publicist of the Reorganized Church's Schismatics," in *Differing Visions: Dissenters in Mormon History*, edited by Roger D. Launius and Linda Thatcher (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1994), 319–42.

57. Richard Price, "God Will Cleanse His Church Again," *Vision* 23 (September 1996): 9. In a phone conversation I had with Price on October 24, 2005, Price said: "The one mighty and strong would be Jesus Christ." It is apparent, however, that if a prophet did come to the fragmented Reorganization/Community of Christ prior to the advent of Jesus Christ, he or she would possess attributes similar to those associated with the one mighty and strong and would essentially have to "set in order the house of God."

58. Russell, "The Remnant Church," 81–82.

59. Richard Price, "Remnant Church Ordains Frederick Larsen as Prophet," *Vision* 40 (May 2002): 8. Russell, "The Remnant Church," 86, lists fourteen RLDS groups extant in 1999 that had formally organized or that claimed to have a prophet.

60. "General Conference Highlights," *Hastening Times* 2 (May 1, 2000): 4. As early as 1996 the group which became the Remnant Church was told that one mighty and strong would be a future leader. An "inspired message" at the May 1996 conference at Independence stated: "Many of you have discussed the coming of one mighty and strong. I say to you that one mighty and strong will come

when My people have sufficiently purged themselves of all unrighteousness." *Genesis of the Remnant Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints* (Independence: Remnant Church, 2003), 43–44. David W. Bowerman, Larsen's counselor in the First Presidency, told me on February 28, 2003, in an interview at the Remnant Church headquarters in Independence that Larsen is one mighty and strong in the same sense that Joseph Smith Jr. and Joseph Smith III were "mighty and strong." In an email to me on March 17, 2003, Larsen explained: "I do not attach any great significance to that term [one mighty and strong], only that it denotes a person of leadership, in this case the Presidency and Prophetic leadership of the Church of Jesus Christ in these Last Days."

61. "Time to Take One More Step . . . Section R-145," *Hastening Times* 3 (May 1, 2002): 9.

62. Peggy Fletcher Stack, "Joseph Smith Descendant at Helm of LDS Remnant Church," *Salt Lake Tribune*, April 20, 2002, C1–2.

63. "Remnant Church Ordains Frederick Larsen as Prophet," *Visions* 40 (May 2002): 9.

64. L. D. Hickey, quoted in Wingfield Watson, *The Revelations of James J. Strang* (N.p., 1939 printing), 22.

65. Wingfield Watson, "The One Mighty and Strong" (Burlington, Wis.: Wingfield Watson, March 1915).