

Shadows on the Sun Dial: John E. Page and the Strangites

William Shepard

William Wine Phelps, an influential Mormon high priest at Nauvoo, Illinois, wrote a long emotional letter on Christmas Day in 1844 which praised Mormonism, the martyred Mormon prophet Joseph Smith, Smith's deceased brothers (Hyrum, Don Carlos, and Samuel), and current Mormon leaders. He also composed pseudonyms for the twelve apostles, the group which assumed the leadership of the Mormon Church following Joseph Smith's death, pseudonyms which became associated with the twelve men. For example, he described Brigham Young as "the lion of the Lord," Orson Hyde as "the olive branch of Israel," and John E. Page as "the sun dial."¹

It is not known why Phelps labeled Page "the sun dial." Whatever the reason, there is no question that, as one of the martyred Prophet's incumbent apostles, Page occupied a position of high respect and influence. Yet for many reasons, Page was not destined to remain in harmony with the majority of his fellow apostles. This article follows the career of John E. Page from the death of Joseph Smith in 1844 to his own death in 1867, with particular emphasis on Page's little-known and generally misunderstood four-year association with James J. Strang, who claimed the mantle of the martyred prophet Joseph Smith. In his post-Strang years, Page associated himself successively with two other claimants to Joseph Smith's authority, James C. Brewster and Granville Hedrick.

Two important elements that provide context are Page's stormy relationship with Orson Hyde and Page's inability to magnify his calling as one of the Twelve during Joseph Smith's final years. Of particular note is Page's desire to have his temporal needs met by Church members, a con-

tentious matter that soured his relationship with his associates both before and after the death of Joseph Smith.

Page is mostly remembered as the apostle who failed to accompany Orson Hyde on a mission to dedicate Palestine for the return of the Jews to their homeland. He is also considered an apostate by many Mormons because he was excommunicated from the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints (labeled “Brighamites” in those contentious times when a single label no longer sufficed) for accepting Strang (whose followers were labeled “Strangites”) as the only legitimate head of the Mormon Church.

The Hyde-Page odyssey began when a letter written by Hyde was published in the April 1840 *Times and Seasons*, a Mormon newspaper at Nauvoo, Illinois, announcing that fellow apostles Hyde and Page had been authorized by a general conference to undertake the previously mentioned mission.² Hyde heroically made his way to Palestine where he performed the required dedication and earned the admiration of the Saints, who built him a house at Nauvoo in June 1843.³

The fact that Page did not fulfill the assignment to accompany Hyde on this mission led many Mormons to question his dedication. When he published a request in the July 16, 1845, *Nauvoo Neighbor* that the Saints build him a modest, two-story brick home with “a good cellar, wood shed and well” at Nauvoo, the Saints made no effort to do so.⁴ At this point, it was a little more than a year since Joseph’s death, the Saints were under pressure to leave the area, and their attention, labor, and resources were concentrated on completing the temple.

This request by Page was not uncharacteristic. A study of his life after 1838 provides other evidence that he believed the Church should support him temporally. For example, when Ezra T. Benson, later an apostle, visited him at Pittsburgh in 1842 or 1843 and mentioned that he had traveled by the cheap but uncomfortable form of deck passage on a steamer, Page flared up: “He [also] had done so but shouldn’t do so any more,” as Benson reported his defensive comments, “for he had labored faithfully [in the service of the Church] eight years, and he considered the Church owed him a living, and should travel after this in cabins and eat warm meals.”⁵

A second example is a letter that Page sent from Nauvoo to Strang at Voree (now Burlington), Wisconsin, on February 1, 1846. It is replete with references to his past missionary successes, demands for support by others, self-pity, and jealousy:

I have been incessantly employed in the vineyard, and have baptized more than one thousand souls. I began my work in extreme Poverty, and have suffered every privation imaginable, my family has been draggled through an Earthly hell in my absence, and I am as poor and destitute as when I first entered into the ministry. I have served this people in all diligence for ten years past, thinking most implicitly, that when ever I should return to any of the stakes of Zion to settle I should be reciprocated by the Church and its authorities and be sustained in my capacity equal with my brethren of the same calling. . . . [M]y brethren of the same quorum appear to enjoy a reasonable plenty to sustain them in their capacity. I do not say they have too much, but I do say, that I do not have enough.⁶

In his excellent biography of Strang, Milo M. Quaife printed a large portion of this letter and concluded that Page's mental state "presented a severe case of inferiority complex."⁷ While I would not disagree, I would more charitably add "burn-out" to Quaife's conclusion. But in either case, Page's assertion that the Church owed him a living reveals what is certainly an unattractive attitude.

Factors which caused Page to reject Brigham Young included this belief that others should provide for him, his inability to tolerate criticism, and his belief that his past missionary labors exempted him from further missionary efforts. Added to these problems, Page continued to engage in self-pity—not a trait Young was likely to accommodate. Further, he was uncomfortable with Young as an individual and believed that the apostles did not have the authority to head the Church. The apostles were to preach the gospel outside the stakes, not govern the Church. The person to preside over the Church, according to Page, had to be a single successor, called by Joseph and ordained by angels. Although Page accepted Strang as Joseph Smith's successor and followed him for more than two years, several of the factors that caused him to reject Young also made conflict inevitable with Strang.

In essence, Page seemed to be struggling to retain his faith in, and allegiance, to a system of religion which required sacrifice and obedience, whether it was Joseph Smith's, Brigham Young's, or James Strang's. He would leave Strang as he had left Brigham Young, complaining that his former brethren had been rejected by God and that he was a victim of their malfeasance.

The Pre-Strang Period

Page was born February 25, 1799, in Trenton Township, Oneida County, New York, to Ebenezer and Rachel Page and claimed to be of

English, Irish, and Welsh extraction.⁸ He was baptized on August 18, 1833, at Brownhelm, Lorain County, Ohio, by Emer Harris (Martin's brother) and was ordained an elder the following month by Nelson Higgins. In May 1836, he moved to Kirtland, Ohio, with his wife Lorain (also sometimes called Lavonia). The following year, he began an eight-month mission to Ontario, Canada, during which he baptized more than three hundred.⁹ After a brief stay in Kirtland, he returned to Ontario in February 1837 with his wife and two sons; there he repeated his 1836 success by baptizing a similar number of converts. These missions marked the high point of Page's ministry, making him the leading missionary in British North America.¹⁰ By his own account, he traveled more than "five thousand miles, principally on foot and under the most extreme poverty."¹¹

Page left Ontario in May 1838 with a company of Missouri-bound Mormons and arrived at DeWitt in Carroll County in the first week of October. While this grueling trip was taking place, Joseph Smith received a revelation at Far West, Missouri, on July 8, which called Page, Wilford Woodruff, Willard Richards, and John Taylor to become apostles and specified that they would depart from the Far West temple site on April 26, 1839, "to go over the great waters [to England], and there promulgate my [Christ's] gospel" (D&C 118:4-6). After arriving at DeWitt, the Page family and the other Mormons were besieged by 400 hostile Gentiles.¹² The destitute Mormons surrendered on October 11, then struggled to reach Far West in Caldwell County where even more intense persecution followed. Here Lorain and their two children, Ephraim and George, died from hunger and exposure or, as Page put it, from "the want of the common comforts of life."¹³

Ebenezer Page, John's brother, was also caught up in the turmoil at Far West, arrested, and told he would be shot the next morning. At the appointed time, according to Ebenezer's account, John joined him at the Far West square. When Ebenezer was called forward, "my brother John put his hand on my shoulder and said, we two share alike: we have buried each a wife in this place, and if we follow them our trials will be over; if you are shot I will avenge your blood." Ebenezer was not shot but was marched with others to Richmond, Missouri, through deep snow with his "toes out" of his broken shoes and was forced to sleep two nights in the snow without a blanket. He said he was incarcerated in the Richmond Jail for five weeks "with no other bed than a brick floor, but little or no fire. I got froze, and my toe nails came off."¹⁴

John Page was among the poverty-stricken Mormons who were driven from Missouri in late 1838. He found refuge with the Judd family, whom he had converted in Canada, near Warsaw, Illinois. Although it is not possible to know with certainty how the deaths of his wife and children affected Page, it seems likely that this sad event undercut his zeal, lessening his emotional and physical ability to make heroic sacrifices for the Church. Still, he joined other apostles in slipping back quietly to Far West where Brigham Young and Heber C. Kimball ordained him an apostle at the temple site on December 19.¹⁵ He returned to Warsaw where he married Mary Judd, nineteen years his junior, in January 1839. He did not accompany his fellow apostles to England in 1839, pleading poverty and personal difficulties.¹⁶ William Smith, another apostle and one of Joseph Smith's brothers, also did not fulfill this mission for reasons similar to Page's. Since other England-bound apostles went in spite of their own penury and illness, Page's and William Smith's reasons were probably received somewhat skeptically.

Following a brief sojourn in Illinois, Page went to the eastern states in April 1840, after receiving the conference assignment of his co-mission to the Holy Land. Evidently, some Page letters in the early part of his eastern activities were deemed "abusive." The Nauvoo High Council conducted an examination and determined that Page "was unanimously approved"—meaning exonerated.¹⁷ He was raising funds for this mission, he said, but later claimed that a series of circumstances beyond his control prevented him from following through. He also claimed that Hyde took all of the available money with him.¹⁸ Page wrote Joseph Smith on September 1, 1841, complaining that Hyde had even "raised money for some land purpose-es [purchases] to some considerable extent besides sending some hansome suplys to his family where as I have not sent one cent though I . . . am poor as poor can be." He added suspiciously: "But I do think that any man that would treat me with that neglect that Elder Hyde has me he would betray me in a more critical hour if by so doing he could save his own life."¹⁹ Page attended the general conference at Nauvoo in April 1842 to defend himself for failing to accompany Hyde; after a hearing, he retained his apostleship, although Joseph Smith said he had "shown a little granneyism" and "should have stuck by Elder Hyde." According to the conference minutes, "A vote was then put and carried that we hold Elder Page in full fellowship."²⁰

Despite the confirming vote, Joseph Smith was less than pleased

and roundly criticized Page in an address to the Relief Society three weeks later when he singled him out as one of the “aspiring Elders” who had “trampled” him “under foot.”²¹ Joseph Smith III, then a boy of about ten, later recalled that his father sent him with Page to procure an item from Page’s rented house. Joseph III described it as a “small affair, located on a sandy lot” that was “within sight of the fine homes occupied by some of the Apostles.” According to Smith, Page told him “with deep feeling”: “Do you think it is just? You know what a fine house Elder Brigham Young has, what a big mansion Heber C. Kimball has, and what a cozy little cottage Elder Hyde has.” Joseph III acknowledged that the houses of Young, Kimball, and Hyde had been built with “church monies.”²²

Page returned to the eastern states with his priesthood intact in late 1842 and presided over the Church at Pittsburgh until mid-1843. While there, he published the newspaper *The Gospel Light* and two pamphlets, *Slander Refuted* and *The Spaulding Story*. He also performed Church duties in Cincinnati, New York, Boston, and Washington, where he published a pamphlet: *An Address to the Inhabitants and Sojourners of Washington*. However, his activities in the East did not please Joseph Smith, who on April 28, 1843, told other members of the Quorum of the Twelve: “As for John Page I want him to be called away from Pittsburg, a good elder to take his place. If he stays there much longer he will get so as to sleep with his granny he is so self righteous. When he asked to go back there, he was going to tear up all Pittsburg; and he cannot even get money enough to pay postage on his letters—or make us a visit.”²³ (There is no record that Joseph had asked Page to visit Nauvoo.) D. Michael Quinn indicates that Page “was [on] a political mission [in] 1844.”²⁴ Evidently, Page preferred living in the eastern states where he was not immediately subordinate to others and where the members were apparently more willing to underwrite him and his publishing ventures.

The Strang Period

Shortly after Joseph Smith’s murder, Page was directed to return to Nauvoo after “publishing the news” of Smith’s death in eastern cities “and getting as many in the Church as possible.”²⁵ Over a year later, Page responded, reaching Nauvoo in December 1845. He was promptly appointed president of the Nauvoo Water Power Company and a member of the Council of Fifty, which Joseph had instituted and which Brigham carried on. He and Mary received their temple endowments on December

10, 1845.²⁶ Page became a polygamist at Nauvoo when he married Lois and Rachael Judd, Mary's sisters (date unknown).²⁷ However, despite these apparent marks of integration, by February 1846, he had investigated and accepted Strang's succession claims.

Strang, a recent convert to Mormonism, claimed that, shortly before Joseph Smith's murder, the founding prophet had sent him a letter appointing Strang as Joseph's successor. Furthermore, at the time of Smith's death, an angel conferred upon him priesthood authority which made him a prophet, seer, revelator, and translator. He also claimed that an angel revealed to him the location of ancient records which were buried on a hill near his residence at Burlington, Wisconsin. After having four of his followers dig them up, Strang said he translated them using the Urim and Thummin. He represented "primitive" Mormonism to a significant number of Mormons who believed that he alone met all of the succession laws established through revelation by Smith.²⁸

In January 1846, Strang sent a well-respected follower, Reuben Miller, to Nauvoo with a summons which ordered the Twelve to cease their "usurpation" and appear before him at Voree by April 1. After listening to the testimonies of Miller and other Strangites and studying the first two issues of Strang's newspaper, the *Voree Herald*, Page signaled his acceptance of Strang in a letter to Strang on February 1.²⁹ Page then boldly preached about Strang's appointment, ordination, and ministry to his fellow Mormons. Mary Page later told their son Justin that, when his father "found the corruption that was going on" (meaning polygamy and the temple endowment), he warned the populace "of the awful destructions that would surely overtake a people who would advocate and practice such corruption going on there."³⁰ Yet Page, of course, as a polygamist and an endowment recipient, engaged in these "corruptions" himself.

Strang expected that Page would speedily move to Voree to help convert the Brighamites. Instead, Page wrote him on February 1: "I cannot see the necessity of such a visit," adding that such a displacement would be inconvenient because his wife's widowed sister lived with them.³¹ Brigham Young removed fellowship from Page on February 9, 1846, citing as causes of Page's apostasy his failure to go to Palestine with Orson Hyde, his "murmuring disposition," and his withdrawal from quorum activities.³² Norton Jacobs, who believed Page was an apostate, wrote in his journal on March 1: "John E. Page . . . had been declaring himself opposed to the course of the Brethren. Br Hide replyd to him in such a

way as to show that he [Page] had been remiss in his duty ever since he undertook to go with Elder Hyde to Jerusalem.” Jacob added that, when Page’s name was presented for the congregation’s sustaining vote in Nauvoo on March 1, “only a few Strangites” voted in his favor.³³ Thomas Bullock, a supporter of Brigham Young, wrote in his journal on the same day: “John E. Page turned Strangite. Preached a Strang Sermon and O. Hyde whipt him on every argument he brought forward.”³⁴

Two days later, according to Young’s *Manuscript History*, Page spoke in favor of Strang outside the Nauvoo Temple and, when Hyde criticized him, retorted, “I will go to hell sooner than take abuse.”³⁵ Bullock recorded this encounter, adding that Page said he was proud “of being cons[idered] an apostate.” Page defined his apostasy by saying: “the 1st pres.[ident] must rece[ive] rev[elations] & direct the 12 wherever they shall go—here is my apostasy.” He added that the “rev[elation] says he [Joseph Smith] would app[oint] ano[ther] in his stead” and that Hyde told him that “the Book of D[oc]trine and C[ovenants] is not to guide the Ch[urch].” Hyde rebutted Page’s claim that Strang was the appointed “other” by recounting: “There was an aid de camp present with Joseph” on June 18, 1844, the day he supposedly wrote Strang’s “Letter of Appointment” and “no Lre [letter] co[uld] have been written—is it not curious that he never told any one of the 12.”³⁶

Page and other Strangites held a meeting March 8, 1846, which Bullock described contemptuously as “a begging sermon.” The hat they passed for a collection “was returned with a few coppers, buttons, chips, and bits of stick.”³⁷ Bullock recorded on March 12 a report “that C[harles] W[esley] Wandell had written the supposed record of Chardolmas which John E. Page preached about on Sunday last and [was] supposed to be translated by J. J. Strang.”³⁸ Three days later, according to Bullock, Hyde, the presiding Brighamite authority at Nauvoo, “read a Revelation which was given him this morning by the Spirit and distributed them [sic] to the congregation.”³⁹

Page wrote Strang on March 12 from Nauvoo, where he was living with a “Brother and Sister Webster.”⁴⁰ He told Strang that he feared his own life was in danger and warned, “I think it would not be safe for your person to come here at present.” He then pledged Strang his full allegiance: “I therefore say in true sincerity of heart . . . that I am fully persuaded that *you are* the man to fill the place of Joseph Smith as *Prophet—Seer—and Translator* to the church.”⁴¹

Page was so unnerved by the real or perceived danger that he left Nauvoo by night, date unknown, but sometime before late May.⁴² Justin Page informed Wilford Poulson that John's brother, Ebenezer Page had warned: "Don't go to the Temple, for your life is in danger . . . [T]he order was given to 'Box up the Sundial and send it down the river.'"⁴³

Page attended the Strangite conference at Voree on April 6–7, 1846, and was accepted as an apostle after he disassociated himself from the "Transactions of the Twelve Apostles in their corruption."⁴⁴ At the trial where Strang excommunicated the apostles who had not obeyed his orders to come to Voree, Page testified that Heber C. Kimball had built his fine home at Nauvoo by using tithing funds and that Hyde had given orders to have him (Page) killed.⁴⁵ Following the conference, Page accompanied Strang and others to visit believers at Norway, LaSalle County, Illinois.⁴⁶

The following month, Page said, he "visited and traveled with" Strang and "minutely investigated" the evidence for and against him. He concluded: "I have been compelled to acknowledge him as a Prophet of God, placed at the head of this dispensation." Page listed his reasons: "Because he [Strang] alone claims the authority according to the Laws of God." Strang "teaches sound and Godly doctrines"; his "teachings carry with them the witness of the Spirit"; he "produces the proper works of a Seer"; he "receives revelations from God"; and "his conduct is fitting to that high calling."⁴⁷

Page was excommunicated from the Brighamite Church on June 26, 1846.⁴⁸ Strang desperately needed someone of Page's stature to endorse him and to undertake missions in his behalf. He urged Page to move immediately to Voree, Wisconsin; but instead Page settled at Elgin, Kane County, Illinois. His reason for doing so is unknown but suggests that difficulties plagued his relationship with Strang from the start. Differences over polygamy would certainly be a candidate for causing tensions.

Still, Strang repeatedly requested that Page minister or preside in branches in the United States and England, suggesting how valuable Page was in his estimation. However, Page refused to preach outside Kane County. Samuel Shaw, a Strangite official at Elgin, where Page resided, complained to Strang in June 1846: "The Brethren here Do all they are able for Brother Page and have Subscribed liberal to assist him and enough to make his family comfortable But I Do think he is too particular

and ask[s] too much of the Bethern[. I]t seems to me that unless he can have things just so he wont go a step on his mission and I can prophesy to you and the Saints that unless John E. Page humbles himself Before the Lord and Sees himself more than he Does now he will not Be any benefit to the Church.”⁴⁹ As if in self-defense, Page wrote Strang from Elgin in July: “To all that think I can do more good by preaching, then by laboring with my hands, I have only to say, the ‘*needful*’ is necessary for food, and raiment, whether obtained by preaching, or laboring, with the hands; a word to the wise is sufficient.”⁵⁰

Page’s situation was clouded not only by poverty but also by ill health. (He suffered for years with asthma, although it is not clear when this ailment became debilitating.) The *Voree Herald* of October 1846, then edited by John Greenhow, announced: “Elder John E. Page has suffered long and painful sickness this past season, and is just getting in health again. A little assistance would bring him again into a rich field of usefulness, where his talents eminently qualify him for success.”⁵¹ Two months later, Greenhow referred to Page in *Zion’s Reveille*, the newspaper which superseded the *Voree Herald*, as “the venerable president of the college of Apostles” and editorialized: “We hope the Church will soon relieve him from all penury embarrassments so as to enable him to take apostolic charge.”⁵²

On New Year’s Day 1847, Page again defended his declining to take the missions that Strang was pressing on him: “You spoke of Elder G. J. Adams going from Cincinnati to Boston without a cent in his pocket. It means if he could do so, so could J. E. P . . . [W]hen all things are soberly considered, I must attend to my self and family until the providence of God shall rule in my favor.” Despite this refusal, however, Page accepted Strang’s invitation for him to preside over the Twelve Apostles and promised to turn his face “towards Voree.”⁵³

Greenhow printed a February 11 letter from Page in the *Gospel Herald*, which he introduced with a reminder of the good services which Page could render the Strangite Church if he commanded sufficient means: “We have received three letters of Philadelphia since we left there, requesting Brother Page to take apostolic charge there; now as soon as he can be furnished necessary funds it will be seen he is not only at their service but the service of the whole church.” In the letter, Page stressed that his “pecunary [sic] embarrassments” were such that unless “a kind providence throws something in our hands sufficient to lift us up out of our present

'embarrassments' the Church must not expect much at our hands in the capacity in which they expect us to serve them." Rather more positively, he affirmed his belief in Strang: "As for President Strang, he carries with him, in all his deportment and proceedings all the evidence of his divine calling that President Joseph ever did." Page attacked the ex-Strangites at Voree, derisively called "pseudoes," and accused them of being "so blind as not to see the folly and illegality of your entire course, having established no affirmative according to the law of God through Joseph, the first president and prophet of the church."⁵⁴

Only a few weeks later, Page reiterated his support for Strang, asserting at the April 6–8, 1847, conference that he was "the only man now living that presents his claims, as the Book of Doctrine and Covenants warrants. . . . If Christ did not, 'through Joseph, appoint' [another in his stead] there is not a man appointed. If Christ has not sent an angel to ordain a successor to Joseph, he has not got a successor on this earth."⁵⁵

At an unknown date between February and April, Page had fulfilled his promise to move to Voree. On April 22, 1847, the *Reveille* announced: "Elder John E. Page wishes his correspondents to direct their communications to Voree, Wis., Post Paid, as he has taken up his resident [sic] there for a season."⁵⁶ According to an undated bishop's report, Page's brother Ebenezer moved him to Voree, submitting a bill to the Church for \$19.25.⁵⁷

The conference had appointed Page to go on a mission to England and Scotland "if his circumstances will admit." A conference resolution read: "That this conference raise by donation the means necessary to remove John E. Page and Mother [Lucy Mack] Smith to Voree in pursuance of their expressed desires."⁵⁸

Zion's Reveille was not printed between April 22 and June 2, 1847, due to Greenhow's sudden resignation as editor. Strang, who desperately needed help with the newspaper, resumed the editorship, but Page filled in during Strang's absences. This responsibility was apparently more to his liking than missionary work, for he diligently attempted to increase the number of subscribers, wrote clear doctrinal articles that are still valued by twenty-first-century Strangites, answered doctrinal questions, preached the importance of gathering to Voree and Beaver Island, and defended the Church against its critics. As there is no record that Page had traditional employment, he may have lived off the limited support he received from his newspaper duties and/or received some assistance from

the Voree Order of Enoch. In any event, he repeatedly made it known that this support was not sufficient. Furthermore, grief struck Page and Mary when their eighteen-month-old son, Justin Enoch, died at Voree in July 1847.

July also found Page defending Strang against former apostle William E. McLellin who taught that Joseph Smith had, in 1834, ordained David Whitmer, one of the Three Witnesses to the Book of Mormon, to become the Church's future president.⁵⁹ Ironically, while Strang was away from Voree in July and August, Page published articles condemning polygamy. In the first, he said: "Should any government whatever adopt and sustain the practice of polygamy, it would of necessity be compelled to enact coercive laws to enforce the collection of a grievous taxation of those who had neither wife nor progeny, to sustain those who have many."⁶⁰

Two weeks later, Page reported that he had talked with Strang for hours about polygamy: "We find to our utmost satisfaction that he does not believe in or cherish the doctrine of polygamy in any manner, shape or form imaginable whatever."⁶¹ Strang returned to Voree within days and publicly concurred, saying that Page "truly represented my sentiments." He added, "I am only astonished that it should be necessary to state them at all." Strang continued that, during his extensive visits to Strangite churches during the past three years, he had "uniformly and most distinctly discarded and declared heretical the so called '*spiritual wife system*' and everything connected therewith."⁶² Strang's statement was consistent with the position he then held—but it would soon change.

Meanwhile, Page's pecuniary affairs continued to be a topic of discussion. In September, Thompson A. Rude, a Strangite who lived at Knoxville, Illinois, indicated that he was thinking of coming to Voree in the spring to build two brick houses, one for Strang and one for Page. Strang published the letter in the *Gospel Herald*, the newspaper that replaced *Zion's Reveille* (published until June 6, 1850), and wrote a postscript: "We will not, however, ask him to build two houses. . . . [I]t would be a great charity if he would *help* build one for elder Page who has labored long, and has not where to lay his head."⁶³ Actually, Page's poverty was not unlike that of most Strangites. For example, Strang had published an article in the September 1846 *Voree Herald*: "As the place [Voree] began to be built last April, principally, by a plundered and exiled people, it certainly is not a very rich city. Its population dwells in tents, and houses; in board shanties, and sometimes many of them in the open air."⁶⁴ Strang

referred to his own poverty on August 19, 1847, “I have no clerk—I have no salary or income except occasional supplies, so that I seldom have a week’s food in my *house*—that though I usually travel by steamboat, *deck passage*. I have not on *any* of my journeys received enough to pay my expense. . . . I have no clothing but what I have worn a year, and very little of that, and *I have a family to support*.”⁶⁵

A month after Strang published Rude’s offer to build two brick houses, Page announced his determination to “visit those places first where we can do the most good . . . and contend for the rights and claims of President James J. Strang to preside over the Church as *prophet, revelator, translator and seer*.” However, he qualified this ringing statement of intent by saying his missionary activities would depend on his “*time and means*.”⁶⁶ Several Church leaders outside Voree interpreted this pledge to visit those places where he could “do the most good” to mean he would speedily visit their areas and support their activities. For example, Strangite Elder Reuben T. Nichols, during his mission in Genesee County, New York, responded: “We need him here.” Strang printed Nichols’s request, appending the comment that it was “not probable” that Page would take missions out of the local area as he is “just getting up a little cabin only twelve feet square *in the ground* for his family to occupy while [he] goes out to places nearer at hand.”⁶⁷

The next month, Page again lamented his health, poverty, and limitations on his ability to undertake missions: “Yes, here we are, seated in a rough board shanty only twelve feet square, and that set in a hole dug in the ground for the want of means to make a warm house above ground.” As for his “strength and constitution of body we are about 33 and 1/3 percent. . . . [M]y wife must have a pair of shoes that she can go to meeting. . . . [M]y children must have winter clothes so they may go to school.” He then laid out his conditions: “Now, reader, draw your own conclusions when we may go out to preach. If we should realize anything at any time from any person to assist us . . . we would go the sooner, if not we shall go when it is consistent.”⁶⁸

For a while in early 1848, things looked more promising. The February 1848 *Gospel Herald* printed a report from the January 8–9, 1848, conference at Ilson, Herkimer County, New York, with a note from Strangite Elder Samuel P. Bacon, which requested that either Strang or Page attend their June conference. Bacon added the enticement: “This conference has voted to raise means to send you to bear your expenses.”

Strang published a comment to the letter, saying that “Brother Page may be looked for with confidence, and possibly myself.”⁶⁹ In March and April 1848, Page visited the Strangites at Elgin, Illinois, and Porter, Wisconsin, located some seventy miles southwest of Voree. His visit at Porter was apparently an enthusiastic one, since Hiram P. Brown, its presiding elder, wrote Strang that Page was returning to Voree “that he may prepare to go to the east to extinguish Brighamism.”⁷⁰

Samuel Graham, the presiding Strangite authority at Jackson, Jackson County, Michigan, wrote Strang in February 1848: “We hope that yourself and brother Page, when you journey east, will come through this State, and visit Albion and Jackson.”⁷¹ Reuben T. Nichols wrote Strang on March 28 and requested that Strang and Page visit the Saints in Genesee County, New York, on their way to the Otsego Conference. Strang’s response was: “Brother Page will probably attend.”⁷²

In the June 29 *Gospel Herald*, Page praised the Order of Enoch: “I do wish all the honest in heart in Chicago were here to see for themselves the union and spirit of the Association.”⁷³ He reaffirmed his commitment to Strang the following month, testifying that Strang alone “presents an indisputable ‘appointment’ and ‘ordination’ in the form that fills the letter of the word of God.”⁷⁴

In August 1848, the *Gospel Herald* belatedly published the minutes of the Brighamite conference, recorded by James Flanagan, held nine months earlier in December 1847 at Council Bluffs. At this conference, the First Presidency had been organized, formalizing Brigham Young’s de facto position as head of the Church. Of special interest to the Strangites was Orson Pratt’s acknowledgement that the arguments of the “apostates (viz. that the organization [without a First President] was not complete.” The minutes also reported Apostle Amasa Lyman’s statement that “the time had come when [the] ends of the church could not be saved without a head.”⁷⁵

Page responded to this reorganization with what had already become a scriptural technicality: that the Twelve were to serve under the Church president and preach the gospel, not preside over the Church. After citing what is now LDS Doctrine and Covenants 43:1–7, he emphasized “that none other was to be appointed to receive commandments and revelations until Joseph was taken.” According to Page, if Joseph Smith was “taken,” his “last official act” would be “to appoint another in his stead.”

He also explained that Emma Smith had told him and others that Joseph had written Strang's Letter of Appointment, dated June 18, 1844, in her presence and that Young himself had proclaimed in the August 15, 1844, *Times and Seasons*: "Let no man presume for a moment that his [Smith's] place will be filled by another." Young's change of mind was therefore proof of Brighamite duplicity. Page also quoted Doctrine and Covenants 124:45 to "prove" that the Brighamites were driven from Nauvoo because they accepted false leaders: "And if my people will hearken unto my voice, and unto the voice of my servants whom I have appointed to lead my people . . . they shall not be moved out of their place." Another of Page's points was that the Brighamites did not complete the Nauvoo Temple (as commanded in Doctrine and Covenants 124:32) and were therefore "rejected as a church." Page circled back to hammer home the argument that the Twelve were equal in authority to the high council, the high priests' quorum, and the seventies. They were therefore just another quorum of the Church—not the ruling quorum. He concluded: "Thus I close with a consciousness I have discharged a duty which I owed to God and those who were once my companions in the gospel of Christ."⁷⁶ Significantly, two weeks later, Page stated: "And could I believe that Joseph Smith did not appoint James J. Strang as his (Smith's) successor I would say amen to Mormonism."⁷⁷

On August 10, focusing on more personal matters, Page emphasized he had paid out enough on postage-due letters to have built a comfortable home and complained: "While I write a blustering north east storm is pelting away on my shanty like cabin, which is not decent to stable a horse in, much less afford a comfortable shelter for a sick wife with a small infant child."⁷⁸

From Voree, Page continued to write against polygamy. In September 1848, in Strang's absence, Page announced: "The saints are hereby instructed that it is their duty and privilege to withdraw their fellowship and support from any and every person that in any form whatever sanctions polygamy, or what is called the '*spiritual wife system*.' Have nothing to do with the unfruitful works of darkness, born of hell and begotten of the devil."⁷⁹ After condemning the practice for several years and also, presumably, pressuring Page to give up his plural wives, less than a year later, Strang secretly married Elvira Field on July 13, 1849. Three additional plural marriages followed.⁸⁰

As might be expected, Page did not take a mission to the East that

summer. In fact, he went only as far as Chicago. Gratifyingly, member P. B. Barber extolled his virtues: "I believe that brother Page has done more good here than all the rest that have been here [Chicago] for three years," and Page printed the letter.⁸¹ By October 1848, however, Strang was still reassuring a correspondent: "Bro. Page will start soon for Ohio, and will doubtless make his way through Pennsylvania."⁸² Page, however, made only a short visit to Grafton, Wisconsin, a village some thirty miles north of Milwaukee.

By the start of 1849, Page was on his last legs as a Strangite. His broken promises and continued recalcitrance resulted in a public examination of his deficiencies at a conference at Voree on April 6–8, 1849. He was sustained in his office only after pledging "his determination to sustain the work to the extent of his talent and understanding."⁸³ Page's detractors maintained that he had the ability to take such missions; but his own record establishes persistent conditions of deteriorating health, poverty, and family illnesses. Thus, it must remain an open question about whether such missions would have been impossible or merely inconvenient.

The month after this public pledge, a notice in the *Gospel Herald* announced that Strang, Page, and Apostle James Blakeslee had "gone on a mission."⁸⁴ However, while Strang and Blakeslee continued on to the East, Page returned to Voree from Racine, Wisconsin. No details are available beyond Strang's statement: "Bro. J. E. Page has left us and returned towards Voree, out of health."⁸⁵ Blakeslee wrote Frank Cooper from Cincinnati on June 8: "The saints here . . . have been greatly disappointed in consequence of Elder J. E. Page not coming to this State last fall. . . . Many knew that he was expected and that he had the means given to him to bring him here."⁸⁶

Further evidence of Page's increasing disaffection from Strang may be seen in his criticism of Strang's Order of Enoch in Voree. According to minutes of the April 1849 conference, Page had previously made the motion to establish the order "after a very careful examination of all points pertaining to it which presented themselves . . . with the sanction of Pres. Strang, and by a unanimous vote."⁸⁷ However, despite his early support for the Order of Enoch, this public gesture, Page must have had deep reservations which he did not hesitate to make public when John W. Archer, a disaffected Strangite, filed a lawsuit that same month to recover a wagon

he had consecrated to the Order. Page gave unrecorded testimony against the order.⁸⁸

Possibly as a result of this action and Page's general lack of energetic commitment, on July 4, 1849, Page was "silenced," meaning that he could not exercise his priesthood or perform in any public capacity in the Church. It also meant that he was dropped from his position as president of the Twelve. Page did not attend his trial, although his brothers Finley and Ebenezer (and others) defended him. Accusations included that he lacked faith in Strang, had promoted schism, had not kept his pledges to support the Church, and had taken money designated to support him on missions but then had failed to go. After his guilt had been determined, Ebenezer acknowledged that his brother "must be given for a time to the buffetings of Satan [sic]" but personally pledged to "hold on to John E. with a love and faith that would reach to eternity." Page was excommunicated on July 7, 1849, and immediately joined the ranks of Strang's vocal critics, coordinating attacks on his former prophet.⁸⁹

Page's Post-Strang Period

On August 26, 1849, Page listed four objections to doctrines taught by Strang and offered to debate him. The objections were: (1) secret oaths associated with the Order of Illuminati;⁹⁰ (2) the legitimacy of the Order of Enoch; (3) Strang's statement that "a prophet is not accountable to any tribunal of the church for what he may say or do"; (4) Strang's statement that "there is no merit in a faith that believed with a reason only in that it believes with a mandate."⁹¹

In early September, Strang reported from Beaver Island that Uriel C. H. Nickerson, an excommunicated Strangite, had "been assisting J. E. Page in getting up opposition for several weeks previous."⁹² At about the same time, a correspondent informed a fellow Strangite that Page was frightening immigrants from "coming to Beaver Island."⁹³

Because he did not have the money to move from Voree, Page remained there and became the leader of the pseudoes, whom he had previously denounced for their attack on Strang. In November 1849, Page became a member of the Church organized by James C. Brewster, whose doctrines deemphasized the office of prophet and centralized authority, rejected many of Joseph Smith's revelations, and held the Book of Mormon to be the "rock of our salvation."⁹⁴ Page, it appears, was still in search of an authentic replacement for Joseph Smith. In any event, Brewster's

doctrines and perhaps his personality appealed to Page at this moment. According to John Quist, Brewster had shown himself as a competitor for the mantle of Joseph Smith at a precocious age:

Brewster, born in 1826, claimed at the age of ten, to have been visited by the angel Moroni. In 1842 he published *The Words of Righteousness to All Men*, which he asserted was ancient scripture written by the prophet Esdras. God had chosen him to present it to the world. Apostle John Taylor immediately denounced Brewster in the *Times and Seasons*, arguing that he was unauthorized to speak for God, and Church officials in Springfield, Illinois, where Brewster lived, agreed with Taylor and promptly excommunicated the young prophet. For the next few years, Brewster advanced his claims by publishing a few pamphlets, and then emerged as a serious factional leader in 1848 when he organized a church and began publishing the *Olive Branch* which contained the writings of Esdras and other materials.⁹⁵

For a period, Page endorsed Brewster with something like his former ardor for Strang, writing in his behalf and lamenting that poverty kept him from a more active missionary work. A letter from Page in the November issue of Brewster's newspaper, *The Olive Branch*, edited by Hazen Aldrich, urged that the *Olive Branch* be given a "faithful reading."⁹⁶ His changing theology was reflected in a January 1850 letter to the *Olive Branch* which said that the Book of Mormon contained the fullness of the gospel and emphasized that, if a doctrine cannot be proven by that scripture, "we are to shun it as we would a deadly poison."⁹⁷

In mid-December, Page learned Strang was traveling with a young lady in the East and realized that he must have become a polygamist. Bishop Gilbert Watson wrote from Voree to Strang at Baltimore: "I am informed that J. E. [Page] had a letter from Philadelphia that your clerk was in the habit of wearing petticoats until very recently and also that he had another from Baltimore confirming the same thing."⁹⁸

Strang was greatly disappointed by Page's defection, showing how unrealistically he had pinned his hopes on the less than zealous apostle. During this extended eastern mission, accompanied by plural wife Elvira Fields who was wearing men's clothing and posing as Strang's secretary, he wrote a correspondent on January 23, 1850: "It is rumored here that J. E. Page and several of the apostates have become Brewsterites." He added bitterly, "Page will not stir out of Voree to preach unless he gets his money secure before he starts."⁹⁹ He added the following day: "To preach up Brewster he must assume that his whole ministry has been in rebellion

against God” since this switch put him in the position of “denying as he now does the existence of the true church.” He recalled how Page had previously insisted that if “baptism of the dead was not true the Bible was an imposition.” (Strang strongly accepted this particular doctrine of Joseph Smith’s.) He then said Page’s “ablest” published work “was on the authority of the priesthood” and wryly added “which he now denies.” He concluded sarcastically: “A series of revelations by which he professes to have been guided during his whole ministry, have all been false; but he has now just found the truth in a return to sectarianism.”¹⁰⁰

Page was frantic to defend himself in the *Gospel Herald* but that newspaper, not surprisingly, refused to provide him with a forum. Watson wrote Strang in February 1850 that Page had made the request and that Watson had told him to prepare a response; however, Watson had done so only “to put him [Page] to the trouble of writing and to see what he would write.”¹⁰¹

Mary J. Styles, a Voree supporter of Page and Brewster, wrote Strang at Baltimore on February 21, extolled Brewster’s successes, and challenged Strang (whom she called the self-proclaimed “Joseph’s successor”) to debate Page, whom Strang was (at least in her mind) dismissing as “this little stripling boy.”¹⁰² Strang’s sharply written response filled seven columns in the *Gospel Herald*. He accused Page of “chang[ing] his position” at least seven times during the past year alone and proposed his own “stripling boy” for the debate: “I have however just consulted Mr. Charles J. Douglass, a clever boy of sixteen, and he has consented that if Mr. Page, Mr. Brewster or any other Brewsterite leader, will take up that cause, he will enter into a discussion in defense of the church of God.” (“Charley Douglas” was, in fact, the pseudonym Elvira Fields was using.) Strang added: “Inasmuch as Mr. Page has often asserted that he knew by revelation of God that Mr. Strang was a prophet Mr. Douglas wishes Mr. Page to answer him without equivocation or evasion, whether he lied at the several times when he gave that testimony, or lies now when he contradicts it.” Strang then cuttingly said: “If Mr. Douglass is not quite old enough for a debate now, he doubtless will be by the time Page is through these preliminaries.”¹⁰³

It is difficult to understand Strang’s thinking in bringing “Charley Douglass” into such prominence. The eastern Saints were appalled when it became apparent that Douglass was actually a young woman, and the

fact that Strang tried to deal with the situation by repeatedly denying that Douglass was a woman turned his mission into a disaster.

Ebenezer Page, who was still loyal to Strang at that point, informed him in April that John was trying to “destroy me as well as you.”¹⁰⁴ However, John Page’s flurry of polemical activity was dwindling away into persistent allusions to his crippling poverty. In May, Page assured Brewster that he was “still as confirmed in the faith of the doctrines and principles taught in the Olive Branch as ever” but “my family circumstances are such that I cannot see it my duty to leave them, to go and preach far from home. As soon as the Lord will break my chains of poverty, I am both willing and ready to go.”¹⁰⁵ That time would not come any more for Brewster’s church than it had for Joseph Smith’s or Strang’s, as far as Page was concerned.

In the summer of 1850 when the U.S. Census was enumerated, Page and Mary were living in Spring Prairie Township, Walworth County, Wisconsin. He listed his profession as “Mormon Clergyman.” He was fifty-one, and Mary was thirty-two. Their children were fifteen-year-old John G., seven-year-old Celestia E., and two-year-old daughter Celina E. In July 1851, their son Justin E. was born in De Kalb County, Illinois.¹⁰⁶

Explaining why he did not make more converts, Page rather defiantly informed Aldrich in October 1850 that he had baptized more than a thousand since beginning his ministry and “could have trebled that number, had it not been for men in the eldership who proved to be a blight to the cause, rather than an assistance.”¹⁰⁷ In January 1851, Page declined an invitation from Brewsterites in Pittsburgh because “the chains of poverty . . . would not possibly admit” such a visit. Furthermore, he confessed with perhaps inadvertent candor that he had been “so extremely humbugged in doctrines and principles that I verily thought was the truth that I now know to be false, that I feel quite delicate about touching pen to paper for publication.” He typically concluded by bemoaning the fact that he “had laid up nothing for old age and was left to the labor of my bare hands, as the only source, with a debilitated constitution for a very co[a]rse livelihood.”¹⁰⁸

Five months later, however, Page was reconfirming his commitment to Brewster: “[I] must humbly confess my faith and confidence in the writings of Esdras is unshaken; they breathe forth the same spirit, morals, and design for which I first embraced Mormonism.” He de-

nounced that first embrace, however, calling the gatherings to Kirtland, Far West, and Nauvoo “three of the greatest swindling shops that the same amount of inhabitants ever witnessed in the 19th century.” Again he complained that his infirmities made him useless “in any temporal capacity,” bade “farewell” to the “sinful world,” and sketched a gloomy future of “drag[ing] out the few remaining days of wretchedness and poverty allocated me on earth.”¹⁰⁹

Apparently in the spring of 1851, Page moved his family to Sycamore, De Kalb County, Illinois.¹¹⁰ At that point, Brewster’s colony had failed to move to California, his organization was unraveling fast, and most of Strang’s followers had “gathered” to Beaver Island.¹¹¹ It is perhaps understandable that an isolated, disillusioned Page could write Hazen Aldrich in January 1852: “Where is Mormonism fled to?” His answer was: “Reader, if it is not in your heart, it is nowhere, as far as you are concerned.”¹¹² He would turn fifty-three the next month.

Hampered by continued poverty and ill health, he refused to join the New Organization, the genesis group which became the Reorganized Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints, although he did preach the first principles of the gospel locally. In 1857 Page met with associates of Granville Hedrick, a farmer and school teacher, and united with that organization, the Church of Christ, on November 8, 1862. (Because this name is so similar to that of many others, it is frequently referred to as the Hedrickites.)

Hedrick, born in 1814, had been ordained an elder in 1842 or 1843 and was the guiding force in uniting small groups of Mormons from Half Moon Prairie, Crow Creek, and Bloomington, Illinois, and Vermillion, Indiana in 1853. They claimed to be a true remnant of the authentic Church and believed they possessed the only valid priesthood. They had much in common with Page during his twilight years, for they accepted only the Bible, the Book of Mormon, and the 1835 Doctrine and Covenants. (In 1918, they replaced the Doctrine and Covenants by the 1833 Book of Commandments.) Either then or later they rejected elements of Mormonism that Page also opposed: polygamy, plurality of gods, the office of high priest, the gathering to Nauvoo, baptism for the dead, and presidency by lineal descent. Even more important was their belief that Joseph Smith had become a “fallen prophet.”¹¹³

Page ordained four men among the Hedrickites, including Hedrick himself, as apostles. At a conference on May 17, 1863, despite having pre-

viously rejected the office of prophet, seer, revelator, and translator, he ordained Hedrick to these positions.¹¹⁴ Presumably, Page performed this ordination reluctantly, persuaded by an importuning Hedrick who undoubtedly was eager—like Strang and Brewster before him—for a blessing from an apostle called by Joseph Smith.

Page apparently became dissatisfied with the Hedrickites also, for he asked John Landers, a Canadian convert who was by then a member of the Reorganized Church, to preach his funeral sermon.¹¹⁵ He died at his home eight miles north of Sycamore on October 14, 1867, from the effects of asthma and was buried on a spot he had selected near the Kishwaukee River. The final appraisal of his estate was \$3,116—not pauperism though he was certainly far from affluence.¹¹⁶

Mary married William Eaton, a Hedrickite founder, and later joined the Reorganized Church. Her firm opposition to polygamy led many to believe that she and John never practiced the doctrine. For example, in 1903, she wrote Joseph F. Smith in Utah: “I am so thoroughly opposed to poligomy [polygamy] and its kindred institutions as inaugurated and promulgated by Brigham Young and the church he represented.”¹¹⁷

Conclusions

There was no greater missionary in North America in early Mormonism than Page. His Canadian missions were marked by tremendous successes as he went “without purse or scrip” and converted hundreds to Mormonism. However, Page lost the drive to continue making sacrifices like Brigham Young, Heber C. Kimball, and other apostles. Living in poverty, he became jealous of the temporal possessions of other apostles. By the time they served their famous missions to England and Hyde undertook his equally famous journey to dedicate the Holy Land, Page’s missionary zeal had diminished. He never again served as an effective missionary, remaining apart from his peers until he was forced to join them at Nauvoo.

After the deaths of Joseph and Hyrum Smith, Page was in turmoil. By January 1846, he concluded that the apostles could not preside in Joseph’s place for doctrinal reasons; but he may also have been unable or unwilling to undergo the sacrifices associated with departing yet again to some unknown destination. Strang’s missionaries approached him at an opportune time, providing the opportunity to break with his “unapprecia-

tive” brethren and unite with a prophet who initially met his understanding of prophetic succession.

Page never revered Strang as he had Joseph Smith, but his joining the Strangites was influenced by his desire to remain a Mormon and to serve under a prophet. This association was also influenced by his declining health and his desire to be supported by others. This trade-off guaranteed that his relationship with Strang would not last. In retrospect, Samuel Shaw’s June 1846 letter to Strang was on target: “Unless he [Page] can have things just so he won[']t go a step on his mission . . . and I can prophesy to you and the Saints that unless John E. Page humbles himself Before the Lord and Sees himself more than he Does now he will not Be any benefit to the church.”¹¹⁸

Shaw was generally accurate. Despite Strang’s obvious desire to woo and reward Page, Page was of limited use because he would not undertake the extensive missions needed during those crucial early years of Strangism. Page then withdrew even further from mainstream Mormonism and his transition to a less demanding form of religion under James C. Brewster. His final Mormon experience was with the Hedrickites. After he ordained Hedrick to be a prophet, it is likely that he became less than enthusiastic about the evolution of Hedrick’s movement as well.

As he neared death, Page concluded that Joseph Smith had become a “fallen prophet” and denied the revelations in the Doctrine and Covenants.¹¹⁹ He did, however, continue to believe in primitive Christianity and the Book of Mormon.

Page’s inconsistent journey through Mormonism was not unique. More than half of the original 1835 apostles rebelled against Joseph Smith. Lyman E. Johnson and John F. Boynton were excommunicated and did not return to the Church. Thomas B. Marsh and Luke Johnson were excommunicated in 1838–39; both were later rebaptized Brighamites but their apostolic office was not restored. William E. McLellin, excommunicated during Joseph Smith’s ministry, was briefly accepted as an apostle in Strang’s church, then was excommunicated. William Smith was excommunicated by the Brighamites in 1846, was then briefly accepted as a Strangite apostle and patriarch, but was also excommunicated, and later still was affiliated with the Reorganization. During Joseph’s lifetime, Orson Pratt and Orson Hyde were excommunicated but later reinstated as apostles. Orson Pratt, Orson Hyde, and Parley Pratt rebelled against Joseph Smith at Kirtland, and the Pratt brothers were labeled as “aspiring el-

ders” along with Page in 1842 at Nauvoo, but all three returned to the apostleship. Furthermore, according to Michael Quinn, approximately half of the membership left the Church within ten years after Joseph Smith’s death.¹²⁰

Page’s ambiguous reactions and successive commitments and disillusionments provide a window through which to gain insight about this complex period of early Mormon history. If the popular motto of many sundials (“I count only sunny hours”) is true, then Page’s was obscured by intriguing but sorrowful shadows.

Notes

1. W. W. Phelps, “Remembered Brother William Smith,” December 25, 1844, *Times and Seasons* 5 (January 1, 1845): 761. William was the only Smith brother still alive at that point.

2. “To All People unto Whom These Presents Shall Come—Greeting,” *Times and Seasons* 1 (April 1840): 86–87.

3. Myrtle Stevens Hyde, *Orson Hyde: The Olive Branch of Israel* (Salt Lake City: Agreka Books, 2000), 165.

4. “Please Read the Following,” *Nauvoo Neighbor* 3 (July 16, 1845): 3.

5. Ezra T. Benson, “Autobiography,” *The Instructor* 80 (February 1945): 53. This autobiography’s date of composition is not known. Benson died in 1869.

6. “Mister James J. Strang,” February 1, 1846, James J. Strang Collection, Beinecke Rare Book and Manuscript Library, Yale University, New Haven, Connecticut, Doc. 10 (cited hereafter as Strang Collection).

7. Milo M. Quaife, *The Kingdom of Saint James: A Narrative of the Mormons* (New Haven, Conn.: Yale University Press, 1930), 32. Quaife evaluated the letter and determined: “Jealousy of his fellow members of the Twelve, and bitterness over the inadequacy of the writer’s financial situation, is reflected in every line of the long communication” (33).

8. Justin E. Page, son of John E. Page and Mary Judd Page, told Mrs. P. A. Watts in 1936 that his father “was the legitimate offspring of an Indian Chief’s daughter, though several generations back.” Mrs. P. A. Watts, Letter to Dear Cousin, March 15, 1936, Wilford Poulson Collection, L. Tom Perry Special Collections and Manuscripts, Harold B. Lee Library, Brigham Young University, Provo, Utah (cited hereafter as Poulson Collection.) The most complete information on Page is John W. Quist, “John E. Page: An Apostle of Uncertainty,” *Journal of Mormon History* 12 (1985): 53–68, updated and printed in *Mormon Mavericks: Essays on Dissenters*, edited by John Sillito and

Susan Staker (Salt Lake City: Signature Books, 2002), 19–43. Quotations are from this 2002 version.

9. Joseph Smith Jr., *History of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints*, edited by B. H. Roberts, 7 vols, 2nd ed. rev. (Salt Lake City: Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, 1951), 2:366 (cited hereafter as *History of the Church*).

10. Brigham Y. Card, Herbert C. Northcott, John E. Foster, Howard Palmer, and George K. Jarvis, eds., *The Mormon Presence in Canada* (Logan: Utah State University Press, 1990), 23.

11. "History of John E. Page," *Millennial Star* 27 (February 18, 1865): 103–4.

12. Page described the persecution at DeWitt in "To the scattered abroad . . ." [*Pittsburgh*] *Morning Chronicle* 1 (January 15, 1842).

13. "History of John E. Page," 104. According to Stephen C. LeSueur, *The 1838 Mormon War in Missouri* (Columbia: University of Missouri Press, 1985), 235, the Page family and five others crowded into the Charles C. Rich home where Lorain died. The two Page children died shortly after the Mormon surrender at Far West. Sarah DeArmond Pea Rich, wife of future apostle Charles C. Rich, wrote in her autobiography: "I took in those that had to leave their homes and flee into the city until I took in seven families . . . and among that number was John E. Page and his sick wife. He was then one of the Twelve Apostles of our church; and about one week after, his wife died; and as the mob was troubling us so severely at this time it was impossible to have Sister Page buried for three days; and twice while she lay in the house a corpse, the mob entered the house and made a search all through the house to see what they could find." "The Journal of Sarah DeArmond Pea Rich," n.d., Perry Special Collections, Lee Library.

14. Ebenezer Page, "For Zion's Reveille," *Zion's Reveille* 4 (April 15, 1847): 55–56. Ebenezer remained a loyal Strangite until some twenty-five years after Strang's death when he became a member of Sidney Rigdon's church.

15. *President Heber C. Kimball's Journal* (Salt Lake City: Juvenile Instructor Office, 1882), 75.

16. James B. Allen, Ronald K. Esplin, and David J. Whittaker, *Men with a Mission, 1837–1841: The Quorum of the Twelve Apostles in the British Isles* (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1992), 3.

17. The Nauvoo High Council, Minutes, April 6, 1841, typescript, 46, Archives, Family and Church History Department, Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, Salt Lake City (hereafter LDS Church Archives).

18. Quist, "John E. Page," 21.

19. "To the President and His Council," September 1, 1841, Letters Received, Joseph Smith Collection, LDS Church Archives. Benjamin Winchester challenged Page's claim that he lacked money to go to Jerusalem, writing to Joseph Smith from Philadelphia: "[H]e pretends that he has not got mo[ney] enough; to this I say he had money enough according to his own statement." Winchester, Letter to Dear Brother in the Lord," September 18, 1841, Letters Received, Joseph Smith Collection, LDS Church Archives.

20. *History of the Church*, 4:585. See Quist, "John E. Page," 21–22, for more detail on Page's relationship with Hyde and this hearing in Nauvoo.

21. "Remarks of the Prophet to the Relief Society," April 25, 1842, *History of the Church*, 4:604.

22. Joseph Smith III, "Elder John E. Page," *Saints' Herald* 82 (January 8, 1845): 150.

23. "Mayor's Court at Nauvoo," April 19, 1843, *History of the Church*, 5:367.

24. D. Michael Quinn, *The Mormon Hierarchy: Origins of Power* (Salt Lake City: Signature Books, 1994), 567.

25. Quist, "John E. Page," 23.

26. According to Justin Page, Letter to "My Dear Friend," July 1, 1935, Poulson Collection, his mother, Mary, was "disgusted" with the endowments, denounced the "horrid oaths that were administered to 'avenge the blood of Joseph and Hyrum Smith,'" and referred disparagingly to the anointing as "greasing themselves." Justin also reported that, when she and John "got home and the door was shut, your father turned to me and said, 'Mary, that is all of the Devil.'"

27. Quinn, *The Mormon Hierarchy*, 567, identified six marriages for Page: Betsey Thompson (one child); Lavona Stevens, 1833 (four children); Mary Judd, 1838 (eight children); Nancy Bliss, 1844 (no children), separated 1845; Rachael Judd (Henderson), 1845 (no children), separated 1846; Lois Judd, 1845 (one child), separated 1846, monogamist after 1846. The Ancestral Section of Family Search, Family History Library Program, identifies only Lois and Rachael Judd as plural wives. In a telephone interview January 1, 2007, Hilda Judd Frier of Sandy, Utah, told me that, according to family tradition, Page's child by Lois Judd was a daughter, Rachael Minerva, later sealed to Benjamin Mitchell. Joseph Fielding Smith, *Blood Atonement and the Origin of Plural Marriage* (Salt Lake City: Deseret News Press, 1905), 49–50, said that Mary Page Eaton told him and others at Independence in August 1904 that "she gave her husband, John E. Page, other wives" (emphasis his). Rachael Judd Page Henderson Hamblin told Dudley Leavitt, Juanita Brooks's grandfather, that she had been a plural wife of Thomas B. Marsh, evidently either Leavitt's

or Brooks's misunderstanding, since she clearly meant John E. Page. Juanita Brooks, *On the Ragged Edge: The Life and Times of Dudley Leavitt* (Salt Lake City: Utah State Historical Society, n.d.), 53. Todd Compton, "Civilizing the Ragged Edge: The Wives of Jacob Hamblin," *Journal of Mormon History* 33 (Summer 2007): 155–98, examines the marriage of Rachael Judd to Jacob Hamlin and confirms she had been Page's plural wife. Justin Page, Letter to "My Dear Friend" (Wilford Poulson) December 1, 1934, Poulson Collection, acknowledged his father's polygamy: "My mother was first, last and all the time against polygamy in any form, although she may have endured the practice of it in her family and in some form for a limited season."

28. The best book on Strang is Quaife, *The Kingdom of Saint James*.

29. "Mr. James J. Strang," February 1, 1846, Doc. 10, Strang Collection.

30. Justin Page, "My Dear Friend," July 1, 1935, Poulson Collection.

31. "Mr. James J. Strang," February 1, 1846, Strang Collection, Doc. 10.

Page's letter was printed in the March *Voree Herald* minus the sentence about his wife's sister. Likely Strang pressured Page to divest himself of his plural wives, a possible allusion to which appears in his statement: "When he [Page] joined us he confessed his faults, and promised to do better." Strang, Letter to "Dear Frank," March 8, 1850, *Gospel Herald* 5 (March 28, 1850): 12.

32. Elden J. Watson, ed., *Manuscript History of Brigham Young* (Salt Lake City: Elden J. Watson, 1971), 31.

33. Ronald O. Barney, ed., *The Mormon Vanguard Brigade of 1847: Norton Jacob's Record* (Logan: Utah State University Press, 2005), 73.

34. Greg R. Knight, ed., *Thomas Bullock Nauvoo Journal* (Orem, Utah: Grandin Book, 1994), March 1, 1846, 57.

35. William S. Harwell, ed., *Manuscript History of Brigham Young 1847–1850* (Salt Lake City: Collier's Publishing, 1997), 63.

36. "Thomas Bullock minutes of a meeting held in Nauvoo, March 3, 1846," transcribed from holograph by Robin Scott Jensen, May 2004. LDS Church Archives.

37. Knight, *Thomas Bullock Journal*, March 8, 1846, 61.

38. *Ibid.*, March 12, 1846, 63. According to Harwell, *Manuscript History of Brigham Young, 1846–1847*, 40, Young "retired to the historian's office and heard read [the] revelation written by Charles Wesley Wandell, 6 March 1846, to entrap John E. Page, who believed it and bore testimony . . . that it was a revelation from the Almighty. This event afforded much merriment to Wandell and his friends."

39. Hyde's "revelation" states: "Behold James J. Strang hath cursed my people by his own spirit and not by mine. Never at any time have I appointed to that wicked man to lead my people." Revelation reproduced in Stevens,

Orson Hyde: *The Olive Branch of Israel*, 199–200. See also “Brother Robinson,” March 23, 1846, *Messenger and Advocate of the Church of Christ* [Rigdon] 1 (June 1845): 479–80, and Hyde, “Dear b[r]other Ward,” April 5, 1846, *Later-Day Saints’ Millennial Star* 10 (May 15, 1846): 156.

40. “Dear Sister [Phoebe] Woodruff,” May 4, 1846, LDS Church Archives.

41. John E. Page, Letter to Elder James E. [J.] Strang, March 12, 1846, emphasis his; P13, f67, Community of Christ Library-Archives, Independence, Missouri; emphasis his.

42. Wandle Mace, Journal, n.d., 99, L. Tom Perry Special Collections, Harold B. Lee Library, Brigham Young University, Provo, Utah.

43. Justin Page, Letter to “My Dear Friend,” July 1, 1935, Poulson Collection.

44. “Conference at Voree,” *Chronicles of Voree*, a holographic Church record of the proceedings at Voree transcribed by James Hajicek, April 6–7, 1846, 62–67 (hereafter cited as *Chronicles of Voree*.)

45. “Page testimony at the 6 Apr. 1846 High Council trial at Voree,” Doc. 6, Strang Collection. William Smith, along with Page, was the only other apostle to accept Strang; but Strang postponed action on Wilford Woodruff’s status because he was in England.

46. “Conference at Norway, Illinois,” April 17–18, 1846, *Chronicles of Voree*, 77.

47. “To the Saints Scattered Abroad,” *Voree Herald* 1 (May 1946): 2.

48. Harwell, *Manuscript History of Brigham Young 1846–1847*, June 26, 1846, 198.

49. Samuel Shaw, Letter to “Brother Strang,” June 1846, Doc. 485, Strang Collection.

50. John E. Page, Letter to “Pres. J. J. Strang,” July 6, 1846, Doc. 35, Strang Collection, emphasis his. Page wanted this hinting letter printed in the *Voree Herald* but Strang did not comply.

51. “Elder John E. Page Has,” *Voree Herald* 1 (October 1846): 3.

52. “John E. Page,” n.d., *Zion’s Reveille* 2 (December 1846): 1.

53. John E. Page, “Dear Bro[ther],” January 1, 1847, Doc. 149, Strang Collection.

54. “Brother Greenhow,” n.d., *Zion’s Reveille* 2 (February 11, 1847): 20, emphasis his. Less than three weeks later, Page again attacked the “pseudoes”: *O Pseudoes! Children will laugh at you, and men of sense will pity you for your folly.* John E. Page, “Brother Greenhow,” n.d., *Zion’s Reveille* 2 (March 1847): 31–32, emphasis his.

55. John E. Page, "Brother John Greenhow," April 13, 1847, *Zion's Reveille* 2 (April 22, 1847): 57–58, emphasis his.

56. "Elder John E. Page Wishes," *Zion's Reveille* 2 (April 22, 1847): 60.

57. "President James J. Strang," Doc. 183, Strang Collection.

58. "Conference at Voree," *Chronicles of Voree*, April 6–8, 1847, 135–43.

59. "Another Hoax Invented by Apostates," *Zion's Reveille* 2 (July 15, 1847): 74–75, emphasis his. Five months later, Page attacked David Whitmer, William Smith, and Brigham Young for claiming to be prophets. "Forgetful Prophets," *Gospel Herald* 2 (December 9, 1847): 176.

60. John E. Page, "Polygamy Not Possible in a Free Government," *Zion's Reveille* 2 (July 22, 1847): 75.

61. John E. Page, "To the Saints—Greeting," *Zion's Reveille* 2 (August 5, 1847): 83.

62. James J. Strang, "Elder John E. Page Has," *Zion's Reveille* 2 (August 12, 1847): 88; emphasis his.

63. James J. Strang, Postscript to "Brother Strang," September 20, 1847, *Gospel Herald* 2 (October 7, 1847): 119.

64. James J. Strang, "Voree," *Voree Herald* 1 (September 1846): 4.

65. James J. Strang, "To Private Correspondents," *Zion's Reveille* 2 (August 19, 1847): 90, emphasis his.

66. John E. Page, "Preaching," *Gospel Herald* 2 (October 14, 1847): 124, emphasis his.

67. James J. Strang, "Extract of a Letter," November 10, 1847, *Gospel Herald* 2 (November 25, 1847): 153, emphasis his.

68. John E. Page, "Here We Are," *Gospel Herald* 2 (December 2, 1847): 166–67. Ironically, Page emphasized Strang's poverty in the same issue when he urged the Saints to send him money sufficient to let Strang hire an editor for the newspaper. "President James J. Strang," 167.

69. "Minutes of a Conference of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints," January 8–9, 1848," *Gospel Herald* 2 (February 2, 1848): 220.

70. Hiram P. Brown, "Brother James," March 22, 1848, *Gospel Herald* 3 (April 20, 1848): 20.

71. Samuel Graham, "Dear Brother J. J. Strang," February 1848, *Gospel Herald* 3 (March 26, 1848): 260.

72. Reuben T. Nichols, Letter to "Beloved Brother," February 28, 1848, *Gospel Herald* 3 (March 26, 1848): 259–60.

73. John E. Page, Letter to "Bro. Calhoon," July 10, 1848, *Gospel Herald* 3 (June 29, 1848): 59.

74. John E. Page, "Answer to the Above," *Gospel Herald* 3 (July 13, 1848): 67–68.

75. James Flanagan, "Brighamite Conference," *Gospel Herald* 3 (August 3, 1848): 77-79.

76. John E. Page, "Remarks on the Brighamite Conference," *Gospel Herald* 3 (August 17, 1849): 92-95.

77. John E. Page, "Lyman Wight and His Position," *Gospel Herald* 3 (August 31, 1849): 107.

78. John E. Page, "Pay Your Postage," *Gospel Herald* 3 (August 10, 1848): 83. This infant was Celina E. Page, born at Voree earlier that year.

79. John E. Page, "Spiritual Wifery," *Gospel Herald* 3 (September 7, 1848): 115.

80. Vickie Cleverley Speek, *God Has Made Us a Kingdom: James Strang and the Midwest Mormons* (Salt Lake City: Signature Books, 2006), 68.

81. P. B. Barber, "Mr. Editor—Sir," n. d., *Gospel Herald* 3 (August 21, 1848): 103.

82. "President J. J. Strang," Letter, September 28, 1848, *Gospel Herald* 3 (October 19, 1848): 155.

83. "Conference at Voree," April 6-8, 1849, *Chronicles of Voree*, 186-93.

84. "On the 13th Inst," *Gospel Herald* 4 (April 19, 1849): 20.

85. "Editorial Correspondence—No. 3," *Gospel Herald* 4 (May 10, 1849): 31.

86. James Blakeslee, Letter to "Dear Frank [Cooper]," June 8, 1849, *Gospel Herald* 4 (July 5, 1849): 73.

87. "Discussion in the Church," *Gospel Herald* 4 (July 5, 1849): 75.

88. "John W. Archer vs. James J. Strang and John Cole, Walworth County, Wisconsin, Justice of the Peace Court (1849)," Perry Special Collections, Lee Library. As a revealing detail, Page's brother, Finley, submitted a deposition supporting the Order of Enoch in this lawsuit.

89. "Conference at Beaver Island," *Gospel Herald* 4 (August 2, 1849): 89-90.

90. Quaife, *The Kingdom of Saint James*, 49-57, discusses the Order of Illuminati.

91. "Objections to Points of Doctrine Taught by J. J. Strang," August 26, 1849, Doc. 154, Strang Collection, emphasis Page's.

92. James J. Strang, "Dear Frank," September 8, 1849, *Gospel Herald* 4 (October 27, 1849): 127.

93. E. J. Moore, Letter to "Brother [Samuel] Graham," October 6, 1849, Doc. 231, Strang Collection. A week later, Strang told another correspondent: "I find that J. E. Page and J. M. Adams [an ex-Strangite at Voree] are joined in close league in correspondence with whomsoever they hope to exert

an influence over." James J. Strang, Letter to "Dear Frank," October 12, 1849, *Gospel Herald* 4 (October 25, 1849): 155.

94. According to Gilbert Watson in Voree, Letter to "Brother Strang," November 13, 1849, Doc. 511, Strang Collection, Page "had turned Brewsterite." Alden Hale, December 30, 1849, Doc. 513, Strang Collection, likewise gloomily informed Strang that "br. Hewits folks have gone after Brewster & most of the pseudoes John E not excepted who is his principle advocate here red hot & I think from all appearance Brewsterism will make nearly a clear sweep of all of those who have left the word of the Lord."

95. Quist, "John E. Page," 29.

96. "To All My Friends and Acquaintances," October 19, 1849, *Olive Branch* 1 (November 1849): 79. In "To My Friends," n.d., *Olive Branch* 4 (January 1850): 104, Page wrote: "This is to tender you my thanks for the tokens of respect you have manifested in writing to me; but I must tell you that my temporal circumstances are such, that I cannot pay postage on communications . . . without robbing my children of their daily bread."

97. James J. Strang, "Dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ," n.d., *Olive Branch* 1 (February 1850): 113–15.

98. Gilbert Watson, "Dear Bro. Strang," February 11, 1850, Doc. 515, Strang Collection.

99. James J. Strang, "Dear Frank," January 23, 1850, *Gospel Herald* (February 7, 1850): 275.

100. James J. Strang, Letter to "Dear Frank," January 24, 1850, *Gospel Herald* 4 (February 14, 1850): 287.

101. Gilbert Watson, "Dear Bro. Strang," February 11, 1850, Doc. 515, Strang Collection.

102. Mary J. Styles, "Postscript of a Letter to Pres. Strang," *Gospel Herald* 4 (February 21, 1850): 292. Alden Hale, a loyal Strangite, commented to Strang on December 30, 1849, that Mrs. Styles "wears his [her husband's] under clothes" and "says she will do all she can to prevent folks from joining the association [Order of Enoch]. In "I have somewhat more to wright," December 30, 1849," Doc. 513, Strang Collection.

103. James J. Strang, Letter to "Mrs. M. J. Stiles," January 30, 1850, *Gospel Herald* 4 (February 21, 1850): 292–95.

104. Ebenezer Page, Letter to James J. Strang, March 7, 1870, Doc. 231, Strang Collection. In a letter to Frank Cooper in Voree, Ebenezer, who was then in Hunt's Hollow, New York, had asked Cooper, somewhat ironically, to transmit Ebenezer's good wishes to John and to inform him that "all the letters he writes to put down James J. Strang, can do nothing against us, but for

us." Ebenezer Page, Letter to "Dear Frank," January 14, 1850, *Gospel Herald* 4 (February 14, 1850): 286.

105. John E. Page, "Brother Brewster," May 18, 1850, *Olive Branch* 2 (June 1850): 186.

106. U.S. Bureau of the Census, 1850, Wisconsin, Spring Prairie Township, Walworth County. Justin Page supplied his birth information to Poulson in Letter to "Prof. M. Wilford Poulson," September 3, 1934, Poulson Collection.

107. John E. Page, Letter to "Brother Aldrich," n.d. *The Olive Branch* 3 (October 1850): 33.

108. John E. Page, Letter to "Brother Aldrich," October 27, 1850, *Olive Branch* 3 (January 1851): 96.

109. John E. Page, Letter to "Brother Aldrich," March 10, 1851, *Olive Branch* 3 (June 1851): 169–71.

110. Justin E. Page said: "It took three weeks for our folks to make the trip, with two yokes of oxen from Voree to what is now DeKalb [County]. They arrived there on May 28th." Justin Page, Letter to "Dear Friend," September 5, 1934, Poulford Collection.

111. Dan Vogel, "James Colin Brewster: The Boy Prophet Who Challenged Mormon Authority," in *Differing Visions: Dissenters in Mormon History*, edited by Roger C. Launius and Linda Thatcher (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1994), 131–34.

112. John E. Page, Letter to Hazen Aldrich headlined "I Believe [in] Mormonism, But Where Is It," *Olive Branch* 4 (January 1852): 90.

113. Information concerning Hedricks and his church is best available in the *Crow Creek Record*, typescript, Church of Christ headquarters, Independence, Missouri, and *An Outline History of the Church of Christ (Temple Lot)* (Independence: Church of Christ Board of Publications, 1953).

114. *The Crow Creek Record*, 14, contains Page's statement: "This [is] to certify . . . that I, John E. Page . . . laid my hands on Brother Granville Hedrick's head . . . and ordained him to the office of the First Presidency and head of the Church to preside over the priesthood, and to be a seer, revelator, translator and prophet, to have all the gifts that God bestows upon the head of the church." He had announced in "Information Wanted," *Olive Branch* 3 (November 1850): 60: "The idea that one law-giver should ordain another to the same capacity . . . is *fake[,] vain and uncalled for*" (emphasis his).

115. Quist, "John E. Page," 41 note 61.

116. Quinn, *The Mormon Hierarchy*, 568.

117. Mary Page Eaton, Letter to "Mr. Joseph F. Smith," May 1903, P13, f743, Community of Christ Archives. Other documents confirm her opposi-

tion to polygamy, including her letters: "Editors of the Herald," November 27, 1877, *Saints' Herald* 24 (December 15, 1877): 381; "Polygamy Mormons Not Biblical," August 19, 1888, *Saints' Herald* 27 (October 15, 1881): 655; "Answer to a Letter from Utah," August 5, 1888, *Saints' Herald* 35 (September 1, 1888): 557-58.

118. Samuel Shaw, Letter to "Brother Strang," June 1846, Doc. 485, Strang Collection.

119. Quist, "John E. Page," 33.

120. Quinn, *The Mormon Hierarchy*, 242-43.