

Wayward Saints

Wayward Saints

The Social and Religious Protests
of the Godbeites
against Brigham Young

Ronald W. Walker

Foreword by Jan Shipp

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To Nelani

*Without her love and help,
this nor anything else would be possible.*

Full of novelty's romance he found
The city of the Saints, and with it all
The stern realities of life. His hope,
Like morning mist, evaporated quite,
And with it, all his dreams of phantom bliss.

—John Lyon, “The Apostate,” c. 1852

What, then, is the rightful limit to the sovereignty of
the individual over himself? Where does the authority
of society begin? How much of human life should be
assigned to individuality, and how much to society?

—John Stuart Mill, “On Liberty,” 1859

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Foreword

Jan Shipps

Brigham Young presided over America's intermountain Zion from 1847, when the Latter-day Saints reached the valley of the Great Salt Lake, until his death in 1877. One feature of those three decades was an unending stream of journalistic, political, and homiletical conjecture about what Mormon life was like. Speculation ranged widely: How, for example, did plural marriage really operate? Who was truly in charge in that mountain fastness, especially in the dimensions of existence that stood apart from religion? What did Mormons actually believe? Was it possible for them to differ with their ecclesiastical leaders and remain in good standing in the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints?

A hundred years later, these and a great host of other speculations and conjectures became matters of academic interest. Historians, anthropologists, folklorists, and practitioners of other disciplines have been working steadily since the end of World War II, seeking to open to view the internal reality of life in the Mormon kingdom. One of the more significant findings yielded by academic research is a demographic profile of nineteenth-century Mormonism which reveals that the flourishing state of the Utah branch of the LDS movement was in large part a function of the combination of extraordinary numbers of converts the LDS missionaries made in northern Europe, and most especially in England, and the successful way in which the church's Perpetual Emigrating Fund enabled huge numbers of Scandinavian and British Saints to join the Mormon gathering in the west.

Historians have by no means ignored the implications of the presence in Zion of Saints from outside the United States. The extent to which they gave a definite foreign flavor to this nation's most successful "homegrown" religion is gradually becoming a staple of historical portraits of Mormonism, and the

industry of the British, Danish, and Welsh Saints and their contributions to Mormonism are frequently noted and often celebrated. In this quite wonderful work, Ronald W. Walker uses his considerable historical gifts to train the spotlight on a group of English Saints whose initial commitment to Mormonism had been strong, but who found the experience of being Mormon in Brigham Young's Zion somewhat less than entirely positive. In so doing, Walker moves beyond celebration to ask a whole new set of questions about the ramifications for Mormonism of having a substantial British component in the LDS cultural mix.

His focus is the so-called New Movement in which a group of intellectually and financially independent Saints—called Godbeites after William S. Godbe, one of its main leaders—mounted a challenge to Young's unitary vision of Mormonism. That this revolt, for that is what it was, is an important part of the story of pioneer Mormonism has long been recognized. Until now, however, only the main outlines of the conflict have been clear, and those have generally been used to paint a picture either of a struggle between liberal and conservative Saints or a personal contest between "Brother Brigham" and a set of contentious followers. By pointing to its cultural dimensions, Walker uses this episode to open a new window onto the Mormon culture that took shape under the leadership of the man Saints knew as the Lion of the Lord.

At the same time, because he places the Godbeite schism in a comparative frame by treating it as a classic case of heresy, Walker illuminates questions of a much more enduring sort. While he provides no answers, in a subtle but cogent manner he poses a set of important questions that have to do with the extent to which intellectual heterogeneity and the spiritual pluralism which it often engenders can be tolerated in a church with a standard worship pattern, rigid authoritative structure, and clearly defined doctrinal base.

Although this study is thoroughly analytical in its overall import, Ron Walker is a master of historical narrative. His collective biography of a set of fascinating individuals makes a whale of a good story. Open its pages to be enlightened. Most of all, read and enjoy.

Preface to the 2009 Printing

When *Wayward Saints* was published in 1998, I suggested that its story had several layers of interpretation. On one hand it told the story of a group of talented men and women who broke from Brigham Young when the transcontinental railroad reached Utah in 1869. The movement became known as the “New Movement” or the “Godbeite Reform,” named after William S. Godbe, one of its main leaders.

The book, however, was meant to be more than a good story about an important event. This study examined religious authority, personal conscience, and the role of faith in a dissenting controversy. The book also asked how Mormon leaders defined apostasy—the line between what was acceptable and unacceptable to church policy. During the New Movement, the Mormon church adopted a standard of conduct that became a precedent for church action.

These classic issues had an immediate feel about them. After all, the book was written in the early 1990s at a time when several leading Mormons, some of them my friends, were leaving the church. A few were even excommunicated. For me, the story of the Godbeites became larger than itself. It told how leaders defended their institutions. It suggested how complex the motives of protagonists could be—both defenders and dissidents—and how these motives often were different from the public language of a dispute. A little scholarly probing revealed that the Godbeites were influenced by a kind of radical free thinking popular in some American and European circles of the time. That radicalism included séances and disembodied spirits, elements of nineteenth-century spiritualism that surfaced in pioneer Utah.

I soon realized the New Movement was something of a parable. Certainly, there are lessons here for church leaders, church members, and church dissidents.

Finally, I hoped readers would learn about the nineteenth-century Mormon commonwealth: that unusual combination of prophet-led theocracy, rural community life, and plural marriage. At center stage, too, was Brigham Young. This work answers a series of questions: What was the nature of pioneer Mormonism? How heavy was Young's hand and did he orchestrate most major events? How did the culture balance private conscience and obedience to authority? And did Mormons march in a single phalanx or did a variety of beliefs exist?

During the ten years since the first printing of this book historians have continued to ask these questions. In fact they were the themes of several recent books about the Mountain Meadows Massacre, one of which I co-authored.¹ Thus the story of the Godbeites remains relevant in the twenty-first century.

We have resisted the temptation to include new material or to rewrite information to reflect new knowledge, although we did correct typographical errors and make very minor clarifications for readability. The basic story is here, and there is little reason to change its main contours.

Ronald W. Walker
Salt Lake City, Utah

Note

1. Ronald W. Walker, Richard E. Turley, and Glen M. Leonard, *Massacre at Mountain Meadows* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2008).

Preface to the First Printing

When the New Movement or Godbeite revolt broke out in the fall of 1869, Brigham Young and the Mormon church at first seemed threatened. Led by able intellectuals William S. Godbe and E. L. T. Harrison, the New Movement clearly had a popular appeal. At the time, some Saints believed that Young had gone too far in defending his Great Basin Kingdom during the crisis-filled months following the completion of the transcontinental railroad. Nor was the opposition of these wayward Saints confined to words. During the course of their revolt, the men and women of the New Movement established a rival church, founded an opposition press, and built what most observers described as the most comfortable lecture and meeting hall in the territory. The Godbeite revolt was an important event in the making of modern Mormonism.

As it turned out, the New Movement's threat to established Mormonism did not last long. Similar to a Great Basin summer thunderstorm, Godbeitism was sudden and menacing at first, but it quickly passed. In the process, however, it raised important questions. The Godbeites wrote well-reasoned essays about the meaning of religion in the modern age, some of which remain as fresh and important today as when they were written. In addition, the New Movement explored the issue of religious authority. In October 1869, William Godbe and E. L. T. Harrison were summoned to a church hearing. In this hearing they defended personal conscience in religious matters; Young and other church authorities responded by asserting the claims of institutional authority. The church had experienced other dissenting movements, but never in the Mormon experience had the classic and often-debated question of ultimate religious authority been so ably and dramatically argued.

Conscience and obedience to authority are not abstract questions—they are issues that shape and influence individuals. This book, then, is not simply about a religious dissent or about the important intellectual questions it raised. It is also about the people who became religious dissenters. It is a collective biography not just of Godbe and Harrison but also of a cast of supporting *dramatis personae*: the historian-dramatist Edward W. Tullidge, authors Fanny and Thomas Stenhouse, former apostle Amasa Mason Lyman, merchant and public advocate Henry W. Lawrence, and educator-lecturer Eli B. Kelsey. Of course, full biographical treatment of so many figures is impossible in a book of this size; my purpose is rather to provide enough of their biographies to tell the story of the New Movement dissent. Moreover, I have tried to be proportional in my treatment: the characters most important to the movement fill the most pages.

I hope my readers will find these people as fascinating as I have found them to be. Most were intellectuals, which I define broadly as having a serious interest in ideas and culture. None received a formal education, but each showed what personal and informal study under the influence of their new, striving religion could do. In examining their lives, I have tried to be respectful, not necessarily of their ideas or causes, but certainly of them personally, as fellow humans. Two of them, I confess, taxed my patience. The Stenhouses maligned Mormonism in their accounts of the church, hardly admirable behavior, though the particulars of their personal lives suggest at least reasons for their conduct.

Some readers may find my approach too full of equanimity. Matters of belief and dissent often evoke strong words, and these I have avoided. Rather than focusing on contention and personalities—finding heroes and villains in my narrative—I have emphasized ideas. Moreover, for the most part, these ideas seem to have been held by sincere and well-meaning individuals. These two elements—the people of the New Movement along with their ideas—seem to me to present a parable about the challenge of modern religious and intellectual life, from which readers, Mormon and non-Mormon, can draw their own conclusions. It is this parable that gives this topic a timeless quality.

My narrative centers on the question of dissent, but it goes beyond intellectual analysis or even biographical narrative. It has a methodological aim. John G. Gager's *Kingdom and Community: The Social World of Early Christianity* first suggested to me that religious dissent in history has a broader meaning than simply identifying the arguments of a controversy. Gager argued that if the early Christian church “had not encountered heretics, it would have

created them.” In short, dissent and schism serve to help define what a religious community accepts and what it believes in.¹

I have taken this insight and expanded it. Using dissent as a historical tool, my hope is to tell a larger story than Godbeitism. My argument is simple: During dissent, rebels and defenders each put forward cherished beliefs and values, revealing in the process the tensions, concerns, and values of a religious community at a specific moment of time. In normal circumstances these beliefs and values may be ignored or suppressed. But when a controversy occurs and when dissidents actually declare themselves, these beliefs become explicit; they become weapons in a fight to control the institution.

Using such a methodological tool and hypothesis, I argue that nineteenth-century Mormonism was actually composed of several kinds or varieties of belief, two of which the New Movement brought face to face. On the one hand was Brigham Young’s Zion. Early twentieth-century scholars paid a great deal of attention to this American anomaly; findings have been summarized and greatly expanded in Leonard Arrington’s landmark study, *Great Basin Kingdom* (1958), and still later by Arrington, Dean L. May, and Feramorz Fox’s *Building the City of God* (1976). My brief treatment of the Mormon Zion adds little detail to these admirable studies, though I do stress Young’s frequent—and often overlooked—refrain that Zion was a piece of practical social engineering designed to improve an immigrant people who had been drawn from the lower and lower-to-middle classes of European society.

The Godbeites opposed Young and his ideal community partly because they represented another strain of Mormonism, which I call “British Mormonism.” Many of the New Movement men and women were products of the Saints’ successful evangelizing of early Victorian Great Britain, and when these members traveled to Utah, they brought with them the values and practices of their earlier days. They prized the city life of their British nativity; they were drawn to ideas and the arts; and they relished public debate. They also remembered British Mormonism’s simple biblical doctrines and its abundant display of spiritual gifts. Finally, these men and women were used to challenging the status quo in Great Britain. All these tendencies were hard to set aside once they arrived in Utah. Indeed, this British heritage helps to explain the Godbeites’ reservations about Brigham Young’s agrarian, practical kingdom, with its stress on conformity, obedience, and unity.

Chapter 5, “Two Rival Visions of Society,” places Young’s Zion and British Mormonism side by side and provides the conceptual framework for this

argument of the book. Chapter 6, “Merchant Wars and Declining Faith,” goes one step further (again using dissent as a conceptual tool) by suggesting that Godbeism was not simply a contest of ideas about religion; it also had an important economic dimension. Godbe, Lawrence, and other New Movement leaders were prominent merchants, a group whose motives Young had questioned from the beginning of his commonwealth: because merchants often accumulated wealth for their own uses, they were notorious, at least in Young’s eyes, for not supporting Zion’s communal, religious ideal. As the transcontinental railroad approached Utah in the late 1860s, promising the merchants more wealth and increased power, Young’s exertions against them increased. He tightened an antimerchant boycott and began the ambitious Zion’s Cooperative Mercantile Institution—steps which he hoped would dilute merchant power. Thus Godbeism revealed another fissure in early Utah and Mormon society: a Zion-corrosive spirit of acquisition, personified by the independent-minded, secular merchant, who styled himself as an apostle of individualism and pluralism. It was hardly a coincidence that the New Movement began when Young’s anti-merchant policies peaked.

The methodological tool of dissent also illustrates the tension between the Mormon community and the United States government during the post-Civil War era. Chapter 12, “Politics,” briefly details Mormon political ambitions, but more especially the beginning of United States’ punitive government policy toward the Mormon church and Godbeite efforts to modify this legislation. The chapter places Godbeism in a national context, arguing that national attitudes as expressed in the Cullom Bill were similar to Republican policies elsewhere. Prominent GOP party leaders, eager to achieve a new, more unified “American nation,” had no more tolerance for “states’ rights” or local rule in Utah than in the defeated South. In both places, the desire was “Reconstruction.”

My study likewise offers new perspectives on Brigham Young’s leadership and the mood of his Zion. Once Young understood that his policies were provoking schism, he abruptly tried to minimize these results, hoping to avoid conflict. This spirit of relative moderation was also evident in the ebullient anti-Godbeite humor periodical, the *Keep-A-Pitchinin*. Humor is a virtue no totalitarian state has ever learned to tolerate gracefully, much less to generate. Thus the *Keep-A-Pitchinin*, like Young’s postschism policies, suggests the need to revise the still prevailing stereotype of Deseret’s heavy-handedness. Although Young and his community did not always observe civil liberties, conditions were never as repressive as some critics made them out to be.

In sum, I have used the New Movement as a literary and historical device—both to observe the tension of personal conscience within individual lives and to study a historical era. In doing this, I have tried to keep the New Movement at center stage. Traditionally, historians have described Godbeitism as a contest between equally sincere church members. According to this interpretation, Mormon leaders defended conservative religion from the challenge of liberals who sought to bring their faith into modern times. This version of events had subplots: Brigham Young and his associates were intent on protecting the old pioneer “Great Basin Kingdom.” They wanted to preserve Zion’s unusual nineteenth-century alliance of church and state and its self-sufficient, semi-independent state within the American nation. At stake were the Mormon values of cooperation, unity, and central management under Young’s direction.

Many of these themes were a part of Godbeitism. However, in the pages which follow, I suggest that the Godbeite revolt was more than an argument between believing church members; Godbeitism involved religious conspiracy, séances and apparitions from beyond the veil, a dissenting Church of Zion that advocated rival religious beliefs, and a political and philosophical radicalism. I hope that my portrait—which adds religious dissent, spiritualism, and freethinking radicalism—gives the New Movement new perspectives and hues.

In tracing Godbeitism, I am particularly concerned with its ideas, which I document through their birth to maturation in a succession of periodicals: the *Millennial Star*, the *Peep O’Day*, the *Utah Magazine*, the *Mormon Tribune*, the daily and weekly *Salt Lake Tribune*, and the *Leader*. In this intellectual pedigree, the essays of E. L. T. Harrison, the main intellectual leader of the movement, are especially important. In addition to this task, I examine the books written by leading New Movement authors. The three works of Fanny and Thomas Stenhouse were significant literary documents, but of greater importance, their writing revealed (and probably intensified) the nation’s negative image of Mormons. Edward Tullidge’s histories—an antiquarian’s delight of source materials and miscellany—fostered the LDS tradition of historical writing.

I also explore the intellectual climate of Utah’s spiritualism. While many today may find the New Movement spiritualist phenomena strange and faintly disreputable, the Godbeites believed that they were on an intellectual cutting edge: they saw themselves as serious-minded advocates of reason, science, natural law, and the law of progress; they believed themselves to be progressive, even radical. In profiling Utah spiritualism, I seek to redress the wrong usually accorded to spiritualism, both in Utah and in national studies.

It is not that spiritualism has been deliberately traduced. The infraction is greater: too often spiritualism is simply ignored and forgotten.

My interest in the New Movement goes back to the beginning of my professional career. A graduate student attending the University of Utah, I was interested in my intellectual heritage. I wrote two seminar papers on Godbeism and then a dissertation, which took the form of more than a half-dozen published articles. Then, degree in hand and career begun, I left my study of the New Movement to pursue other historical interests.

Several years ago, several colleagues suggested that I collect my old essays into a book. Jill Mulvay Derr, my colleague at Brigham Young University, was unusually persuasive. Another impetus came when University of Utah archivist Stan Larson telephoned with the news that the university had recently acquired some papers of William S. Godbe. I was aware of this collection, but these important papers had been unavailable to historians because of an ongoing but never completed biography.

Persuaded to begin a book, I resolved to put the project on a short leash—no more than two or three months of work. I would let my previous essays stand as written, but add several new chapters for a fuller treatment. I soon found that such a strategy would not work. My changed ideas, interests, and approach to the New Movement required new thinking and new research. Moreover, paragraph after paragraph of my earlier articles called for more detail. Then there was the challenge of writing. While occasional paragraphs and in some cases several pages lingered from my earlier articles, I soon realized that most of my previous work required reorganization and rewriting. As a result, most of the completed manuscript is new. It is also a larger and more ambitious book than I intended—and one that required more time to write than I at first foresaw.

In writing this book, I have incurred heavy debts. I give special thanks to my wife, Nelani, and to my children. They not only tolerated my many hours in my study, they also gave unflagging encouragement and understanding. When researching the book, I received courteous help from staffs of many research libraries, including the Henry E. Huntington Library in San Marino, California; the Hubert H. Bancroft Library, Berkeley, California; the University Library, University of Nevada–Reno; the History Division of the Reorganized Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints, Independence, Missouri; the Western Americana library at the University of Utah, Salt Lake City; Special Collections, Brigham Young University, Provo, Utah; and most important, the Library-Archives of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, Salt Lake City.

As is typical, my secretary Marilyn Rish Parks has been efficient in preparing the manuscript. Brigham Young University professor Don E. Norton and his staff, especially editor Kim Greenburg, saved me many months of rewriting by their careful copyediting. They materially improved the manuscript. I also owe a debt to the University of Illinois Press copyeditor, Patricia Hollahan, whose patient skills helped me to avoid many errors, word phrasing as well as document citing.

Readers representing a variety of viewpoints read the manuscript in its preliminary form. I am ashamed that I have prevailed on so many friends: Thomas G. Alexander, Leonard J. Arrington, Howard Allan Christy, Ronald K. Esplin, Klaus J. Hansen, Richard L. Jensen, Jill Mulvay Derr, Jan Shipps, and John W. Welch. Their suggestions greatly improved the manuscript, though of course the responsibility for its final shape and content is mine.

I also owe a warm debt to the Charles Redd Center for Western History, the Brigham Young University Religious Studies Center, and the Joseph Fielding Smith Institute for Church History for their financial assistance in publishing this book. During a time of rapidly rising publishing costs, such generous assistance is deeply appreciated.

Three comments about style and presentation: First, I have allowed the men and women of this story to speak for themselves by occasionally quoting their words and phrases; these people, after all, were articulate and even colorful, and their personalities emerge through their writing. Second, the notes are presented in a condensed form which will require the reader to search a list of abbreviations and an accompanying bibliography to secure a full citation. Third, the book opens with the arraignment of several of the main Godbeite leaders before the Salt Lake School of the Prophets, a communitywide forum of Mormon men. I intend this introduction to be more than a way to engage the reader. It treats the beginning of Godbeitism as non-Mormons at the time viewed the revolt, and as a result, the portrait may seem unflattering to Brigham Young and Mormonism. Moreover, in this chapter I provide few details and explanations. But I hope that the remaining pages of the book contain the detailed, complex, and more balanced story behind this outward event. The introduction, in short, is an invitation to begin a journey of discovery.

Note

1. Gager, *Kingdom and Community*, 79–80.

Abbreviations

Names and Places

BY	Brigham Young
BYU	Brigham Young University
HamGodbe	Hampden C. Godbe
LDS Archives	The Library-Archives of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, Salt Lake City, Utah
LDS Church	The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints
SL	Salt Lake
SLC	Salt Lake City
WSGodbe	William S. Godbe

Books

<i>HSLC</i>	<i>History of Salt Lake City</i>
<i>RMSaints</i>	<i>Rocky Mountain Saints</i>
<i>TIAll</i>	<i>“Tell It All”</i>

Periodicals and Sources

<i>DEN</i>	<i>Deseret Evening News</i>
<i>DN</i>	<i>Deseret News</i>
<i>DNWeekly</i>	<i>Deseret News Weekly</i>
<i>JD</i>	<i>Journal of Discourses</i>
<i>JH</i>	“Journal History” of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints
<i>JMH</i>	<i>Journal of Mormon History</i>

<i>MStar</i>	<i>Millennial Star</i>
<i>MTrib</i>	<i>Mormon Tribune</i>
<i>NYHer</i>	<i>New York Herald</i>
<i>OPH</i>	<i>Our Pioneer Heritage</i>
<i>PODay</i>	<i>Peep O'Day</i>
<i>SLHer</i>	<i>Salt Lake Herald</i>
<i>SLTel</i>	<i>Salt Lake Telegraph</i>
<i>SLTrib</i>	<i>Salt Lake Tribune, Salt Lake Daily Tribune, Salt Lake Daily Tribune and Mining Gazette</i>
<i>SLWTrib</i>	<i>Salt Lake Weekly Tribune</i>
<i>TPH</i>	<i>Treasures of Pioneer History</i>
<i>TQMag</i>	<i>Tullidge's Quarterly Magazine</i>
<i>UHQ</i>	<i>Utah Historical Quarterly</i>
<i>UMag</i>	<i>Utah Magazine</i>

Rebellion in Zion

During the late summer weeks of 1869, the men of the rebellious *Utah Magazine* must have wondered if anyone was listening. The Tabernacle pulpit remained quiet, the “block teachers” had not come calling, and President Brigham Young issued no anathemas. Then in late September, the Lion of the Lord stirred. Without any explanation, Young quietly extended “mission calls” to editor Elias Harrison and writer William Shearman. These calls would require the men to leave their homes for several months to preach in the eastern United States.¹ Normally, such calls came during a session of the Mormon church’s semiannual general conference, when a church spokesman would read a long list of prospective missionaries. But these were not normal times. Perhaps as a courtesy to the men or perhaps to avoid public excitement, Young extended his calls to Harrison and Shearman prior to the start of the conference. The assignments were confirmed during the actual conference a week later.

Some said Young used mission calls to punish certain church members. He denied it. However, he did admit to sometimes calling a few recalcitrant men to serve missions in order to do them “good” and to “give them a chance to get the spirit of God.”² For the writers of the *Utah Magazine*, the distinction was a small one. At the very least, they believed that President Young wanted to hinder their efforts and perhaps close their independent press. Young’s action followed the publication of the article “Our Workman’s Wages,” which had obliquely attacked Young’s suggestion for a sweeping reduction in Utah wages.³ Young was willing to make such unpopular suggestions if he believed conditions required them.

The missionary assignments may have given Harrison and Shearman reason for pause. At least, Harrison apparently gave his call serious attention.

Perhaps for a moment it rekindled his old feeling for Mormonism. More likely, for tactical reasons he wished to delay his long-brewing confrontation with Young. Harrison apparently sent word to headquarters that he intended to comply.

But on one point there was no compromise: the *Utah Magazine* would continue. Its next issue, published on 2 October, contained a "Notice to Our Patrons," which explained: "As, owing to certain Church requirements lately made on us, some of our subscribers may fear the suspension of the *Utah Magazine*, we beg to inform them that, under any circumstances, we intend to see that our issue does not stop for a single number. We have obligations to our subscribers which we intend to fulfill. They may rely on our continuing the publication of the Magazine in the same energetic spirit as heretofore, until it is in every way a perfect success."⁴ This notice was signed by Harrison and William S. Godbe, the joint publishers. They planned to have Edward W. Tullidge, another of their associates, edit the magazine in Harrison's absence.⁵ Tullidge had taken the editorial reins before.

Events, however, soon caused these plans to change. A day or two after Harrison and Godbe issued their statement, Schuyler Colfax, vice president of the United States, arrived in Utah for a second visit. Increasingly opposed to conditions in Utah, and furious over reports that Young had publicly called him a drunkard and gambler (a charge that LDS officials later took pains to deny),⁶ Colfax refused the city's extended courtesies and instead met privately with some of the prominent opponents of the LDS hierarchy, including the editors of the *Utah Magazine*. Colfax sought to rally the flagging spirits of the "Gentile" merchants, who were increasingly tried because of Young's boycott of their goods. Colfax also spoke excitedly of the possibility of summary federal laws against Young and his followers, of military force, and even of a Utah Expedition like the one twelve years earlier.⁷

Colfax's harsh talk apparently convinced Harrison and Godbe that they could delay their showdown with Young no longer. Accordingly, the *Utah Magazine* dissidents confided to Colfax the "secret" of their planned "revolution," which they now resolved to push forward. Whatever their own conflict with Young and his ideal society, Harrison and Godbe sided with the Mormon people, and they wished to avoid the stern measures that Ulysses S. Grant's administration seemed on the verge of taking. As a policy alternative, they held out to Colfax the hope of a "conservative, peaceful, [and] necessarily slow" reformation from within. Utahns, they promised, would work against Utahns, and Mormon dissenters would lead the way.⁸

T. B. H. Stenhouse, who several days before Colfax's visit had written a veiled anti-Brigham editorial on "Progress" in his *Telegraph*, and who increasingly was restive with conditions in the Mormon capital city, had the opportunity to explain his views to the vice president.⁹ Invited to join Colfax on a private drive through the city, Stenhouse pressed for a Utah-led reform. At first Colfax was not impressed, and he again talked of the federal government's mailed fist.

"Will Brigham Young fight?" he asked.

The editor had no doubts about the answer to that question and was dismayed by the prospect. If the government used force, even the *Utah Magazine* nonconformists would "heal up the breach," return to full fellowship, and resist the federal army. What else could they do? Their families and life companions were Utahns. A better policy, Stenhouse insisted, was to cause a division between the people and their religious leader—and that could only be done from within. "Depend upon it," he said, "the Government had better let us alone with this business [of Utah reform], simply giving its protection to the 'New Movement men.'"¹⁰

Colfax left the city, pledging that the government would support local reform. But the question he had asked Stenhouse ("Will Brigham Young fight?") was haunting. Young was a fighter. What would he do about their proposed Utah reform movement?¹¹

President Young's firmness was confirmed at the church's general conference held during the second week of October. During the conference, Young again had strong words for the Salt Lake City merchants. While some of these men, such as William Jennings, had gracefully yielded to Young's demands for mercantile cooperation, the president believed others were so "sore" over his policies that if someone laid the "weight of . . . [his] finger" on them they would certainly "hurt." From the merchants' first days in the Salt Lake valley, they had defied Young with their unconscionable profits. In response he had "labored, toiled, preached, guided and counselled" them—but without appreciable results. Now, as he instituted the church's own system of mercantiling, they should expect no quarter.¹²

As Young spoke these words, the thought of William S. Godbe and his associates must have rested uncomfortably in the back of his mind. Godbe was a leading merchant in the city, and since coming into Utah almost twenty years earlier he had been Young's friend and loyal supporter. Godbe's business profit margins, while high, were still much lower than most. Young appreciated this civic-mindedness, but lately a gulf seemed to be growing between them. To date, Godbe had not joined Young's mercantile cooperative, and he seemed not to possess his former religious fervor.

During the first weeks of October, the pages of the *Utah Magazine* contained nothing more controversial than a call for personal purity in the Mormons' peculiar institution of plural marriage. But the 16 October issue had a very different tone. One article discussed religious obedience, a highly prized and almost unchallenged virtue in Zion—at least to members of the Mormon leadership. In contrast, the *Utah Magazine* suggested that obedience was “neither a virtue nor a vice.” It could be either. Men and women should therefore avoid “blind obedience” and test any religious teaching by the “light of their own souls.” If an idea or project was found to be wanting, a “manly, conscientious refusal to act” was then appropriate. It was time, concluded the article, to put aside “self-imposed mental tyranny,” which was “far worse than African slavery.”¹³

The article, written obscurely and abstractly, did not mention Utah conditions or President Young. But in the muffled atmosphere of Zion, where a direct attack by church members on Young's leadership was unheard of, the article was rebellious. Godbe later admitted as much. “Our aim was to reach the people,” he said, who were “good” but “mised.” “We did not wish to antagonize them or anybody else or to come out broadly and attack their belief—their religion, but rather to influence them by reason to induce them to see as we did. Their allegiance to the priesthood was of course their fatal error and we were desirous of having them see as we saw.”¹⁴

So theoretical was the article's style that Young himself might have agreed with most of its views, but another piece in the same issue, “The True Development of the Territory,” struck at the heart of the Mormon temporal Zion. It ably argued that Utah must develop an economic “specialty” that would allow its citizens to compete nationally and gain needed cash. Without money, Utah would be doomed to the inefficient and unfair ways of its old barter system—“a nest of uncleanness in practice.” Utah's only hope, claimed the magazine, lay in opening its mines and putting the territorial economy into the American mainstream. “Here [in mining] nature needs no forcing to produce us what we need, she groans with profusion. . . . Our grand specialty lies almost untouched.” To do otherwise, the magazine concluded, would be “to turn our back on the open hand of God, and shut our eyes to that providential finger and voice, saying, ‘this is the way walk ye in it.’”¹⁵

This “providential finger and voice” was certainly different from the will of President Young. During the first twenty years of Utah's development, his economic policy favored the yeoman farmer, who he believed should be yoked with men engaged in “home” manufacturing. Favoring these two