

Comments on Doctrine & Covenants 31

This revelation is specifically aimed at Thomas B. Marsh. Thomas was an early convert and was zealous in accomplishing many good works in the Church. See D&C 112 for additional specific instructions to Marsh.

Based upon general subject, this section can be arranged in a fairly simple complementary repetition:

- A - (v. 1-2) Don't worry about your family.
- B - (v. 3-5) Commission
- A - (v. 6) Don't worry about your family.
- B - (v. 7-13) Exhortation

1 Thomas, my son, blessed are you because of your faith in my work. 2 Behold, you have had many afflictions because of your family; nevertheless, I will bless you and your family, yea, your little ones; and the day cometh that they will believe and know the truth and be one with you in my church.

3 Lift up your heart and rejoice, for the hour of your mission is come; and your tongue shall be loosed, and you shall declare glad tidings of great joy unto this generation. 4 You shall declare the things which have been revealed to my servant, Joseph Smith, Jun. You shall begin to preach from this time forth, yea, to reap in the field which is white already to be burned. 5 Therefore, thrust in your sickle with all your soul, and your sins are forgiven you, and you shall be laden with sheaves upon your back, for the laborer is worthy of his hire. wherefore, your family shall live.

6 Behold, verily I say unto you, go from them only for a little time, and declare my word, and I will prepare a place for them.

7 Yea, I will open the hearts of the people, and they will receive you. And I will establish a church by your hand; 8 And you shall strengthen them and prepare them against the time when they shall be gathered. 9 Be patient in afflictions, revile not against those that revile. Govern your house in meekness, and be steadfast. 10 Behold, I say unto you that you shall be a physician unto the church, but not unto the world, for they will not receive you. 11 Go your way whithersoever I will, and it shall be given you by the Comforter what you shall do and whither you shall go. 12 Pray always, lest you enter into temptation and lose your reward. 13 Be faithful unto the end, and lo, I am with you. These words are not of man nor of men, but of me, even Jesus Christ, your Redeemer, by the will of the Father. Amen.

v2 The nature of the difficulties with his family is unclear. According to his own history his wife was initially favorably impressed with the writing she saw of the Book of Mormon (see Marsh's autobiography below), but there is no mention of her being baptized or being a member.

Marsh ran away from his childhood home at the age of 14 and never returned, so this excludes the reference being to extended family.

We do know that when Marsh ultimately apostatized it was because he followed the will of his wife and not of the Lord:

About the time he [Thomas B. Marsh] was preparing to leave this Church, he received a revelation in the Printing Office. He retired to himself, and prayed, and was humble, and God gave him a revelation, and he wrote it. There were from three to five pages of it; and when he came out he read it to Brother Brigham [Young] and me. In it, God told him what to do, and that was to sustain Brother Joseph and to believe that what Brother Joseph had said was true. But no; he took a course to sustain his wife and oppose the Prophet of God, and she led him away....

"Thomas B. Marsh was once the President over the Quorum of the Twelve -- over Brother Brigham, me, and others; and God saw fit to give him a revelation to forewarn him of the course he would take; and still he took that course. We told him that if he would listen to that revelation he had received, he would be saved; but he listened to his wife, and away he went. His wife is now dead.... She led him some eighteen years; and as soon as she died, he came to Winter Quarters -- now Florence -- and has written to us, pleading for mercy. We have extended it to him, and he will probably be here this season or the next." (Heber C. Kimball, Journal of Discourses, Vol. 5, pages 28-29)

We might conclude from this that his wife's hostility towards the Church preceded the Missouri fallout, even to the time of the present revelation.

v3 "your tongue shall be loosed", regarding this phrase Smith and Sjodahl, in their Doctrine and Covenants Commentary, comments as follows:

As long as Thomas B. Marsh was faithful he was an eloquent speaker. At the time of the troubles in Clay County, Mo., he was elected a member of a committee to lay the grievances of the Saints before the authorities of the State. On that occasion he spoke so impressively that General Atchison, who was present, shed tears, and the meeting passed resolutions to assist the Saints in finding a new location.

The speech being referred to is described by Marsh himself as follows:

...difficulties having occurred between the citizens of Clay County and the Saints, a meeting was held near Liberty, the county seat, for the purpose of amicably arranging matters. I was appointed a delegate from Fishing River. At that meeting a committee of twelve were appointed to draft resolutions, which were received by unanimous vote; when a committee of three, --viz., Lyman Wight, myself and Samuel Bent were appointed to meet next day in Liberty for the presentation of these resolutions. I was appointed by said committee, spokesman, and was enabled to speak so feelingly in relation to our previous persecutions and expulsions, that General Atchison could not refrain from shedding tears. This meeting passed resolutions to help the Saints to seek out a new location, and appointed committees to collect means to aid the poor Saints to remove. (History of Thomas Baldwin Marsh [by himself], Millennial Star, Vol. 26, page 375)

Unfortunately, the content of his speech does not appear to have been documented.

v10 "a physician unto the Church", regarding this moniker, A. Gary Anderson comments:

Brother Marsh had been promised in D&C 31:10 that he would be a physician to the Church. Perhaps the fulfillment of this promise can be seen in several events involving Church members upon his return to Kirtland in November and December of 1831. During conferences held at Winchester, Randolph County,

Indiana, Brother Marsh played an important role in solving problems which had developed among the Saints. Some of the Saints here had assumed they were to have all things in common which had caused controversy. Marsh also visited with a Brother James Moore who was accused of whipping his wife. He acknowledged his error and surrendered his license to preach the gospel to the conference. The following day Elder Marsh and Elder John Whitmer were appointed to help two brethren, George Heartly and Oliver Walker in settling personal difficulties which had arisen. Ezra Booth, who had also been called as a missionary to Missouri, had returned to Ohio disgruntled and published letters in the Ohio Star to discredit Mormonism. Marsh, near the close of 1831, passed through New Portage, Ohio, on his return to Kirtland. It appears that Thomas's teachings had a very positive effect on some of the people of this area as recorded in a letter written by Ambrose Palmer.

Ezra Booth at "Bates Corners" in 1831 in New Portage tried to overthrow Mormonism. However, we afterwards received preaching from Brothers Reynolds Cahoon, David Whitmer, and Lyman Johnson, and after that also by Brother Thomas B. Marsh and others which left an impression on the mind of many that was not easily eradicated; and the way thus being prepared, the Lord in his providence sent Brother Milton Stow among us who baptised a number of persons.

These first recorded acts as a healer within the Church illustrate an ability in leadership and chronicle the fulfillment of his revelatory calling as "physician." (Regional Studies in Latter-day Saint Church History: New York, pages 138-139)

Historical Material Pertaining to Doctrine & Covenants 31

Below is a brief historical review of Marsh's life. Second is Marsh's autobiographical account which originally appeared in print in the Millennial Star. This is followed by Marsh's confession before a General Conference wherein he frankly details his fall and warns against apostasy. Then follows a selection from Journal of Discourses wherein Marsh discusses the events. The final selection is of the earliest available sources for the "milk strippings" incident.

Section 31 was first printed in the Book of Commandments in 1833, then in the Kirtland edition Doctrine and Covenants in 1835. It was published in Times and Seasons, volume 4, number 10, pages 1460147, dated April 1, 1843, and in the Millennial Star, volume 4, number 11, page 168, dated March, 1844.

Excerpt from Doctrine and Covenants Commentary

Thomas B. Marsh was born at Acton, Mass., Nov. 1st, 1799. He came on a visit to Palmyra at the time when the Book of Mormon was being printed, and Martin Harris gave him a sheet containing the first sixteen pages of that book. He read these pages and showed them to his wife, and both received a testimony that the book was of God. When he learned that the Church had been organized, he moved to Palmyra and was baptized by David Whitmer. This was in the month of September 1830, shortly before this Revelation was received. After a career of varied experiences, Marsh moved to Kirtland, where he was called to the Apostleship. In July and August 1837, he accompanied the Prophet Joseph and Sidney Rigdon on a mission to Canada, and the following year he and David W. Patten were appointed presidents of the Church in Missouri, until the arrival of the Prophet. In August 1838, a year of apostasy, he became disaffected and turned traitor to his brethren. He made an affidavit to the effect that the "Mormons" had a company called "Danites," organized for the purpose of murdering "enemies"—a statement he certainly knew to be false. After that he became a vagabond, without resting-place, without peace, for many years.

In 1857, he came to Salt Lake City, and asked forgiveness and reinstatement in the Church. President Young introduced him to the audience in the Bowery, on the 6th of September. He told the congregation that he had suffered greatly during his absence from the Church, but that he acknowledged the hand of the Lord

in the chastisement he had received. He made the following significant remark concerning the beginning of his apostasy:

"I became jealous of the Prophet, and then I saw double and overlooked everything that was right, and spent all my time in looking for the evil. * * * I saw a beam in Brother Joseph's eye, but it was nothing but a mote, and my own eye was filled with the beam. * * * I talked with Brother Brigham and Brother Heber, and I wanted them to be mad like myself; and I saw they were not mad, and I got madder still because they were not. Brother Brigham, with a cautious look, said, 'are you the leader of the Church, Brother Thomas?' I answered, 'No!' 'Well then,' said he, 'Why do you not let that alone?' Well, this was about the amount of my hypocrisy. I meddled with that which was not my business" (Journal of Discourses, Vol. V., p. 207).

At the conclusion of his address he was by unanimous vote received into full fellowship as a member of the Church. (Hyrum M. Smith and Janne M. Sjodahl, Doctrine and Covenants Commentary, pages 164-165)

Excerpt from Millennial Star

I was born in the town of Acton, Middlesex County, Massachusetts, November 1, 1799. My father, James Marsh was born in Douglas, Massachusetts, March 27, 1751. My mother, Mary, daughter of Titus Law, was born in Acton, Massachusetts, March 18, 1759.

I spent my early life in farming at Westmoreland, New Hampshire, until I was fourteen years of age, when I ran away and went to Chester, Vermont, where I worked on a farm three months; then went to Albany, New York and engaged in a public house as a waiter, where I remained eighteen months, when I went to New York and engaged in the city hotel and remained two years; when I returned to my old situation in Albany, and after serving a year returned to New York City Hotel for two years; then removed to Long Island, New York, where I engaged as groom to Edward Griswald, in whose service I remained one and a half- years; during which I became acquainted with Elizabeth Godkin, and married her on the 1st November, 1820.

Immediately after marrying I commenced in the grocery

business, in New York, in which business I remained one and a half years, but did not succeed. I then engaged in a type foundry in Boston, where I continued seven years.

While engaged in this business I joined the Methodist Church and tried for two years to be a genuine Methodist, but did not succeed any better in getting Methodist religion than I did in the grocery business. I compared Methodism with the Bible, but could not make it correspond. I withdrew from all sects, and being about to leave Boston my old class leader wished me to take a good certificate, but I informed him I did not want it. I had a measure of the spirit of prophecy and told him that I expected a new church would arise, which would have the truth in its purity. He said to me, you no doubt mean to be a leader in that new sect. I told him I had no such intentions. He said, he prayed that the Lord would make me a firebrand in the midst of that new religious body, as reformation was necessary. My wife unknown to me, however, got a certificate for herself and me on one paper. I informed her that I never would attend, but I would find a suitable class for her if she wanted to join.

I remained in Boston several years engaged in the type foundry. During this period I became acquainted with several friends whose opinions concerning religion were like my own. We kept aloof from sectarians, and were called by them Quietists, because we resembled so much a sect in France known by that name professing to be led by the Spirit.

I believed the Spirit of God dictated me to make a journey west. I started in company with one Benjamin Hall, who was also led by the Spirit. I went to Lima, Livingston County, New York, where I staid [stayed] some three months, and then left for home. I called on my return at Lyonstown, on a family, whose names I do not recollect. On leaving there next morning the lady enquired if I had heard of the Golden Book found by a youth named Joseph Smith. I informed her I never heard anything about it, and became very anxious to know concerning the matter. On enquiring, she told me I could learn more about it from Martin Harris, in Palmyra.

I returned back westward and found Martin Harris at the printing office, in Palmyra, where the first sixteen pages of the Book of Mormon had just been struck off, the proof sheet of which I obtained from the printer and took with me. As soon as Martin Harris found out my intentions he took me to the house of Joseph Smith, Sen., where Joseph Smith, Jun., resided, who could give me any information I might wish. Here I found Oliver

Cowdery, who gave me all the information concerning the book I desired. After staying there two days I started for Charleston, Massachusetts, highly pleased with the information I had obtained concerning the new found book.

After arriving home and finding my family all well, I showed my wife the sixteen pages of the Book of Mormon which I had obtained, with which she was well pleased, believing it to be the work of God. From this time for about one year I corresponded with Oliver Cowdery and Joseph Smith, Jun., and prepared myself to move west.

Learning by letter that the Church of Jesus Christ had been organized on the 6th day of April, 1830, I moved to Palmyra, Ontario County, in September following, and landed at the house of Joseph Smith, Sen., with my whole family. During the month I was baptized by David Whitmer, in Cayuga Lake, and in a few days I was ordained an elder by Oliver Cowdery with six elders, at Father Whitmer's house. Joseph received a revelation appointing me a physician to the Church.

After remaining in that state, during the fall and winter the Church moved to Ohio. In the Spring of 1831 I journeyed with the main body to Kirtland.

In June, 1831, I was ordained a high priest at a conference held in Kirtland where I received an appointment to go to Missouri with Ezra Thayer, and preach by the way. In consequence of Ezra Thayer delaying so long, I went to Joseph, who received the word of the Lord appointing Selah J. Griffin in Thayer's stead, with whom I journeyed to Missouri, preaching by the way; many believed our testimony, but we did not wait to baptize any. While near the end of our journey I was attacked by chills and fever and arrived very sick. I staid [stayed] at the house of Brother Benjamin Slade till I got well.

Sometime in January, 1832, Bishop Partridge having furnished me with an Indian pony, I returned to Kirtland, accompanied by Cyrus Daniels. I labored, preaching through the country around Kirtland until the summer opened, when, in company with Ezra Thayer, I went on a mission through the state of New York and returned home early in the fall; and made preparations to go up to Zion in company with several other families from Kirtland.

At that time an objection was raised to me being the leader owing to my inexperience, but there was division on this subject as some considered my office entitled me to the presidency. My opposers appealed to Joseph, who decided I should lead on account of my office; still, although we started with the

understanding that I was to lead the company, my opposers never became reconciled to my presidency, until we got into difficulties at the Ohio River, where we could not proceed without better order. Here they yielded to my dictation through necessity; but when we had got down the Ohio River as far as Louisville a rebellious spirit was again manifested.

At this point I separated from the company; took my brother-in-law, Lewis Abbot and his wife, and proceeded by boat to St. Louis, where I arrived one day in advance of the company. On our arrival we found the cholera raging in St. Louis and vicinity. I went immediately to the outskirts of St. Louis, rented a house, and began my preparations to start overland to the west.

On the arrival of the other part of the company, I was sent for by them about midnight, to doctor them, but the messenger being unable to pilot me, I had to return to my house until morning, when I was sent for again, and soon found Brother Blacklee, but too late to do him any good. He died the next day.

I started for Jackson County, and arrived November 10, having been two weeks on the journey. I located in Jackson County with the brethren who had come from Colesville, where I was invited by Brother Joseph Knight, who was very sick with the bloody flux. I attended him faithfully and my wife nursed him; he succeeded in overcoming the disease and soon got well.

I had my inheritance, about thirty acres, set off by Bishop Partridge, on the Big Blue River, Jackson County, where, before spring opened, I had a comfortable log house built, into which I moved early in the spring and commenced clearing land to raise a small crop that year. I succeeded in getting some corn and potatoes planted, which did very well. Before the year was out the mob combined together and drove us out of the county. Some of the Saints moved into Clay County; others with myself removed to Lafayette County, where we wintered, and during which time I kept a common school and taught the children of the brethren.

In the spring of 1834, having learned that Joseph and a company were coming to relieve the brethren, I moved over with many others into Clay County, where I was living when they arrived. Several of those who came up in Zion's Camp remained in Missouri. I cultivated a small piece of land this summer and succeeded in raising some corn. I was chosen one of the high council.

In January, 1835, in company with Bishop Partridge and agreeable to revelation, I proceeded to Kirtland, where we

arrived early in the spring, when I learned I had been chosen one of the Twelve Apostles.

May 4th, 1835, in company with the Twelve I left Kirtland and preached through the eastern states, holding conferences, regulating and organizing the churches, and returned September 25.

In the winter of 1835-36, I attended school, studied the first English grammar under Sidney Rigdon, and Hebrew under Professor Seixas (a Hebrew by birth), and in the spring returned to my place on Fishing River, in Clay County, Missouri, where I arrived in the month of April.

Soon after this, difficulties having occurred between the citizens of Clay County and the Saints, a meeting was held near Liberty, the county seat, for the purpose of amicably arranging matters. I was appointed a delegate from Fishing River. At that meeting a committee of twelve were appointed to draft resolutions, which were received by unanimous vote; when a committee of three, --viz., Lyman Wight, myself and Samuel Bent were appointed to meet next day in Liberty for the presentation of these resolutions. I was appointed by said committee, spokesman, and was enabled to speak so feelingly in relation to our previous persecutions and expulsions, that General Atchison could not refrain from shedding tears. This meeting passed resolutions to help the Saints to seek out a new location, and appointed committees to collect means to aid the poor Saints to remove.

The Church, considering the citizens were thus exerting themselves to have us removed, appointed Elisha H. Groves and myself to visit the churches in Illinois, Kentucky and Tennessee, for the purpose of borrowing money to enter lands in the new settlement at the land office for the convenience of the Saints who were coming on. We started in July, and succeeded in borrowing upwards of \$1400, principally from the brethren in Kentucky and Tennessee, at 10 percent interest.

September 19, 1836.--We parted with Brother Woodruff and the Saints in Kentucky, Brother D. [David] W. Patten and his wife accompanying us to Missouri. I proceeded immediately to the new city which had been laid out, and called Far West, in our absence.

On our arrival we delivered the money to those who sent us and received \$1 per day and traveling expenses, for our services while gone. We furnished our own horses. I procured a lot immediately, built a house and moved into it. During the winter I made improvements on my lot; got up my firewood; attended

councils and preached to the Saints.

About the month of June, 1837, I started for Kirtland in company with D. [David] W. Patten and Wm. [William] Smith, to try and reconcile some of the Twelve and others of high standing who had come out in opposition to the Prophet. On my journey I met Brother P. [Parley] P. Pratt about five miles west of Columbus, Ohio, moving to Far West; I prevailed on him to return with us to Kirtland. On our arrival I went to Brother Joseph's house, where I remained all the time I was in Kirtland.

About this time a special meeting was appointed at Joseph's house, by himself, to which several of the brethren who were disaffected were invited. I was chosen moderator, and called upon the aggrieved parties to speak first. A reconciliation was effected between all parties.

July 23rd, Joseph Smith, Jun., received a revelation to me concerning the Twelve Apostles; and on the 27th, I started with Joseph and Brother Rigdon for Canada. During this mission we visited the churches in Canada west, and returned about the last of August.

September 3.--I attended a conference held in Kirtland, in which Luke Johnson, Lyman E. Johnson and John F. Boynton were rejected. John F. Boynton plead, as an excuse for his course, the failure of the Kirtland Bank. President Brigham Young, in a plain and energetic manner, strongly protested against his course, and was not willing to receive him into fellowship until a hearty repentance and confession were manifested. I sustained Brother Brigham's remarks and acquiesced in his testimony.

Soon after, in company with Hyrum Smith, I proceeded to Missouri, where we arrived in October, and in a few weeks, Presidents Joseph and Sidney arrived, and we held a conference which sustained the authorities of the Church.

Sometime in the winter, George M. Hinkle, John Murdock and some others came to my house, and suggested the importance of calling a meeting to take into consideration the manner that W. [William] W. Phelps and David and John Whitmer had disposed of the money which I had borrowed in the Tennessee and Kentucky Branches in 1836. Accordingly, a meeting was called February 5th, 1838, and the conduct of the Presidency in Zion investigated. The Church would not sustain said presidency, but appointed myself and Brother D. [David] W. Patten presidents, pro tem., until Joseph Smith would arrive. We also reorganized the Church in Zion, placing every officer in his proper place. Joseph arrived in Far West, March 14th, and approved of the course we had pursued.

May 18.--In company with Joseph, Sidney and others, I went north in Daviess County. We met with Oliver Cowdery, Lyman E. Johnson and others encamped, who were also exploring northward on Grand River. We soon returned to Far West.

In August the mob recommenced their depredations against the Saints. About this time I got a beam in my eye and thought I could discover a mote in Joseph's eye, though it was nothing but a beam in my eye; I was so completely darkened that I did not think on the Savior's injunction: "Thou hypocrite, why beholdest thou the mote which is in thy brother's eye, when a beam is in thine own eye; first cast out the beam out of thine own eye, then thou shalt see clearly to get the mote out of thy brother's eye."

Had I seen this I should have discovered myself a hypocrite, but as I had often said while in the Church, if I ever apostatized I would go away quietly; I tried to do so, but the Saints kept inquiring of me if I was going to leave, and so did Joseph twice. I evaded him both times. The last time he almost got me into so tight a corner I could hardly evade. He put the question direct to me, whether I was going to leave? With an affected look of contempt I answered: "Joseph when you see me leave the Church, you will see a good fellow leave it."

After making preparations I started from Far West and moved three miles out of town, ostensibly for the purpose of settling, and soon moved off to Clay County, and from thence to Richmond, Ray County, where I saw David, John and Jacob Whitmer and Oliver Cowdery, who had all apostatized.

I enquired seriously of David if it was true that he had seen the angel, according to his testimony as one of the witnesses of the Book of Mormon. He replied as sure as there is a God in heaven, he saw the angel according to his testimony in that book. I asked him, if so, why he did not stand by Joseph? He answered, in the days when Joseph received the Book of Mormon, and brought it forth, he was a good man and filled with the Holy Ghost, but he considered he had now fallen. I interrogated Oliver Cowdery in the same manner, who answered similarly. (History of Thomas Baldwin Marsh [by himself], The Latter-day Saints' Millennial Star, Vol. 26, pages 359-60, 375-76, 390-92, 406, this work was reproduced in its entirety in Milton V. Backman's compendium entitled Writings of Early Latter-day Saints and Their Contemporaries)

Excerpt from Journal of Discourses

I do not know that I can make all this vast congregation hear and understand me. My voice never was very strong, but it has been very much weakened of late years by the afflicting rod of Jehovah. He loved me too much to let me go without whipping. I have seen the hand of the Lord in the chastisement which I have received. I have seen and known that it has proved he loved me; for if he had not cared anything about me, he would not have taken me by the arm and given me such a shaking.

If there are any among this people who should ever apostatize and do as I have done, prepare your backs for a good whipping, if you are such as the Lord loves. But if you will take my advice, you will stand by the authorities; but if you go away and the Lord loves you as much as he did me, he will whip you back again.

Many have said to me, "How is it that a man like you, who understood so much of the revelations of God as recorded in the Book of Doctrine and Covenants, should fall away?" I told them not to feel too secure, but to take heed lest they also should fall; for I had no scruples in my mind as to the possibility of men falling away.

I can say, in reference to the Quorum of the Twelve, to which I belonged, that I did not consider myself a whit behind any of them, and I suppose that others had the same opinion; but, let no one feel too secure: for, before you think of it, your steps will slide. You will not then think nor feel for a moment as you did before you lost the Spirit of Christ; for when men apostatize, they are left to grovel in the dark.

I have sought diligently to know the Spirit of Christ since I turned my face Zionward, and I believe I have obtained it. I have frequently wanted to know how my apostasy began, and I have come to the conclusion that I must have lost the Spirit of the Lord out of my heart.

The next question is, "How and when did you lose the Spirit?" I became jealous of the Prophet, and then I saw double, and overlooked everything that was right, and spent all my time in looking for the evil; and then, when the Devil began to lead me, it was easy for the carnal mind to rise up, which is anger, jealousy, and wrath. I could feel it within me; I felt angry and wrathful; and the Spirit of the Lord being gone, as the Scriptures say, I was blinded, and I thought I saw a beam in brother Joseph's eye, but it was nothing but a mote, and my own eye was filled with the beam; but I thought I saw a beam in his, and I wanted to get it out; and, as brother Heber says, I got mad, and I wanted everybody else to be mad. I talked with

Brother Brigham and Brother Heber, and I wanted them to be mad like myself; and I saw they were not mad, and I got madder still because they were not. Brother Brigham, with a cautious look, said, "Are you the leader of the Church, brother Thomas?" I answered, "No." "Well then," said he, "Why do you not let that alone?"

Well, this is about the amount of my hypocrisy--I meddled with that which was not my business. But let me tell you, my brethren and friends, if you do not want to suffer in body and mind, as I have done,--if there are any of you that have the seeds of apostasy in you, do not let them make their appearance, but nip that spirit in the bud; for it is misery and affliction in this world, and destruction in the world to come. I know that I was a very stiff-necked man, and I felt, for the first four or five years especially, that I would never return to the Church; but towards the latter part of the time, I began to wake up and to be sensible that I was being chastised by the Almighty; and I felt to realize the language of Jeremiah concerning Ephraim in the last days, where he says, "Is Ephraim my dear son? Is he a pleasant child? For since I spake against him, I do earnestly remember him still; therefore my bowels are troubled for him; I will surely have mercy on him, saith the Lord."

Thinks I, this language suits my condition. I then thought, I will go back and see if the Lord will heal me, for I am of the seed of Ephraim, and I felt troubled from that day, and my soul was vexed with the filthy conversation of those Sodomites.

After forming this resolution, I tried to get an outfit, and I kept trying for two or three years; for I did not want to come hear sick, lame, decrepit, and dependent; and therefore I kept on trying; but instead of gaining, I was like the man that undertook to climb the tree--I slipt down further than I got up. I then thought to myself, I am getting old, and every year makes me older and weaker; and if I do not start, I shall soon die, and then whose fault will it be? I concluded it would be my own fault if I stayed. I therefore said, "I will go now." That was last January. I looked round a few days to see what I could raise, and I raised five dollars and ten cents, and I said, "Lord, if you will help me, I will go." I felt that he would: therefore I started with but five dollars and ten cents, from Harrison County, Missouri, to come all the way to this Valley. I knew that I could not come here with that small sum, and I did not see how I was to get any more; but before I got out of the State, the Lord had changed my fortune, and I had \$55.05. I then concluded within myself that the Lord was with me; but still I

had some hardships; for I traveled on foot in some severely cold weather, and I found that my chastisement was not over, notwithstanding the favor of the Lord in helping me to some means. I remarked that I had fifty-five dollars when I left the States, and that, too, obtained honestly, without any speculation, trading, swapping, or stealing; but I earned what I got, and left a good name behind me.

I have given you some items of my apostasy. I will now relate some of my recent experience.

When I got to Florence, or Winter Quarters, where I had to stay, waiting for an opportunity to cross the Plains, I read many of the publications and works of the Church, and became strengthened and informed in regard to the Priesthood of the Son of God. Although I knew something about the Priesthood before, so far as the theory was concerned, yet I discovered that I had never properly understood it; and hence I feel that my faith is greatly strengthened. I wanted to get posted up and see what the "Mormons" had learned since I left them; and I learned very much by reading the discourses that had been preached here.

The doctrine of plurality was a great bugbear to me, till I got to Florence and read the works of brother Orson Pratt; and now I see that it is heaven's own doctrine, and the Church of Jesus Christ can never be perfect without it. Had I known as much of the Church of Jesus Christ and its doctrines before I apostatized as I now know, I think I could not have back-slidden.

I have come here to get good society--to get your fellowship. I want your fellowship; I want your God to be my God, and I want to live with you for ever, in time and eternity. I never want to forsake the people of God any more. I want to have your confidence, and I want to be one in the house of God. I have learned to understand what David said when he exclaimed, "I would rather be a door-keeper in the house of God than to dwell in the tents of wickedness." I have not come here to seek for any office, except it be to be a door-keeper or a deacon; no, I am neither worthy nor fit; but I want a place among you as a humble servant of the Lord.

I did say once, when coming along, inadvertently, They may think that I am coming to get office, but if they offer it to me I will not have it, and that will show them I do not want any; but I took a second thought and said, I will say, The will of the Lord be done.

I have now got a better understanding of the Presidency of the Church than I formerly had. I used to ask myself, What is

the difference between the President of our Church and a Pope? True, he is not called a Pope, but names do not alter realities, and therefore he is a Pope.

God is at the head of this kingdom, and he has sustained it. I was along in the start of it, and then Joseph was the little one; but, as the Scriptures say, "The little one shall become a thousand, and the small one a strong nation;" and Joseph lived to become a thousand, and this people are fast becoming a strong nation.

I am just as confident as I can be in the truth of those things that brother Heber has spoken of; for I see in my meditations how the Priesthood has been restored, when the Lord had taken it from the earth by the death of the Apostles, and how the authority to administer in the name of Jesus Christ was also taken, and that, when the authority went, miracles were taken away and the power of God ceased to be manifested through men during the long period of the rule of anti-christ and anarchy.

I see the propriety of God's vesting the authority in one man, and in having a head, or something tangible to see, hear, and understand the mind and will of God. When I saw this, I said, It is consistent: Christ is the great head of the Church. Christ is the head of his Church in the same relationship as every head is to the body to which it belongs; for every head must have eyes to see, a mouth to speak, and ears to hear. Well, Jesus Christ is the head of the Church, and he has got a man to represent him on the earth--viz., President Brigham Young. Jesus Christ is still the head of the Church; and his will to man on the earth is known by means of the mouthpiece of God, the Prophet, and Seer.

When I came to these conclusions, I said, Now I will go there among them; for I have found out how I may learn wisdom from God. I want to learn wisdom, and not to be ruled by my own imaginations.

God has given me reasoning powers, and I will use them, so far as I am capable, in the acquirement of knowledge. But how will I get wisdom from God? The answer is plain. He speaks through his mouthpiece, therefore I will go and place my ears close to his mouth,--for I am not good of hearing,--and I will pray to God in secret; and to such he has said he will answer them openly. I will pray for the thing that I want; and the chief desire of my heart before God is, that I may know that he accepts me.

Well, Where shall I go, was the next question, to get a

response to this desire? The answer was, Go to the President of the Church--to the mouthpiece of God, and then you can be taught, and there will be no difficulty in learning the mind and will of God.

I thank God that he has brought me back here, where I can receive such instructions, and with a prospect of seeing, notwithstanding my advanced age, the glory of God. Many of you that are young will live, as has been said, to see the glory of God manifested on the earth. Amen. (Thomas B. Marsh, *Journal of Discourses*, Vol. 5, pages 207-210, September 6, 1857)

Excerpt from Regional Studies in Latter-day Saint Church History

While in Far West I was at the trial of Sister Marsh the wife of Thomas B. Marsh, he was the President of the Twelve, for skimming milk[.] Several sisters in Far West had agreed to unite in make[-]ing cheese by putting their milk together, each one promising not to skim their milk. The trial was before Bishop Edward Partridge where it was [?] that she had not kept her promise and was about to withdraw the hand of fellowship[.] [T]he Bishop and others plead with her to make things right and offered to give her time to do so, but no [?] she called on God and angels to witness her innocence[.] [A]t this the Prophet jumped up and said "Sister Marsh if you say that you lie like the devil." This remark from the Prophet at that time made me [stare? startled?], However on a little reflection, I [sure?] got over it. (A. Gary Anderson, *Regional Studies in LDS History: Missouri, "Thomas B. Marsh: Reluctant Apostate"* 1994, taken from *The Journal of Henry William Bigler*, SLC FHL US/CAN film #465, the Bigler journal entry is probably circa 1846. Apparently, the first recorded telling by George A. Smith of the Thomas Marsh apostasy was recorded by William Clayton in Heber C. Kimball's diary on Dec. 21, 1845: "Sometimes mere trifles, destroy the confidence which each ought to have in the other, this prevents a union of faith & feeling[.] The apostacy of Thomas B. Marsh was caused by so small a thing as a pint of strippings and his oaths brought the exterminating order which drove us all out of Missouri[.]")

Copyright © 2021 by S. Kurt Neumiller <kurt.neumiller@gmail.com>. All rights reserved. No part of this text may be reproduced in any form or by any means for commercial gain without the express written consent of the author. Digital or printed copies may be freely made and distributed for personal and public non-commercial use.