
John Gould

1783–1855

D&C 100:14

By 1832 John Gould, a native of New Hampshire, was residing in Spafford, New York, where he had presided over a Free Will Baptist congregation for fifteen years. He and members of his congregation listened as missionaries preached the gospel of Jesus Christ. Believing their message, John was baptized on December 16, 1832, by Reynolds Cahoon and ordained an elder the next day by David W. Patten. He and many of his congregation left Spafford, New York, to gather with the Saints in Kirtland, Ohio. It was reported that when “Elder Gould, was carried from the fold of the church into the embraces of the new faith, ... it was not possible for the church to recover from such an exodus of membership. The church building was deserted.”¹

In fall 1833 the Prophet Joseph sent John Gould and Orson Hyde to Missouri with letters, documents, and instructions to obtain redress through legal channels for impending eviction of the Saints from Jackson County. Of their journey to Missouri, Orson Hyde wrote,

We started on foot with our valises on our backs, a distance of about one thousand miles. We travelled about forty miles per day through a sickly fever and ague country, swimming rivers, and pushing our clothes over on a log or raft before us. We arrived in Jackson County about the beginning of the Saints troubles there [September 1833]. We delivered our letters and documents, and were sometimes surrounded by the mob, who threatened to wring our heads off from our shoulders.

¹ Everett Ellsworth Roundy, *The Roundy Family in America* (Dedham, MA: Everett Ellsworth Roundy, 1942), 215–216.

Several little skirmishes took place while there, and some few were killed and wounded.²

While in Perrysburg, New York, the Prophet Joseph and his counselor Sidney Rigdon received a revelation on October 12, 1833, hinting at the troubles John and Orson faced on their journey and promising “inasmuch as they keep my commandments they shall be saved” (D&C 100:14). John and Orson delivered the letters, documents, and instructions to Church leaders and returned safely to Kirtland in November 1833.

Having firsthand knowledge of the persecution in Jackson County, in March 1834 John was anxious to recruit volunteers for Zion’s Camp to assist his beleaguered friends. He traveled with the Prophet Joseph towards western New York until Joseph thought it best that he gather recruits in Pennsylvania and meet him in Ohio, ready to march to Zion around the first of May. While recruiting for the camp, John shared news of the Restoration with all who would listen. The *Messenger and Advocate* reported,

[Warren A. Cowdery] informs us that an addition of about 20 members has recently been made to a small church of 13, raised up Grove, Allegany Co, by elder J. Gould, and that the prospects are flattering.³

A new church has been recently raised up by the instrumentality of Elders Gould and Babcock in Woodhull, in Steuben Co consisting of six members, represented by J. Gould, Elder. The church in Grove, Allegany co, consists of eighteen members, two of whom have been added since last conference, reported by J. Gould, Elder.⁴

In August 1835 “John Gould gave his testimony in favor of the [Doctrine and Covenants] ... and acknowledge[d] it as the doctrine and covenants of [his] faith.”⁵ Although he professed faith in August 1835, two months later Reynolds Cahoon, the missionary who had baptized John, preferred charges against him before the Kirtland High Council “for making expressions calculated to injure the cause we have espoused, and manifesting a strong dissatisfaction with the teachings of the Presidency.”⁶ He confessed his wrongs and was forgiven.

² Roundy, *The Roundy Family in America*, 215–216.

³ *Messenger and Advocate*, December 1834, 45.

⁴ *Messenger and Advocate*, April 1835, 101.

⁵ Doctrine and Covenants, 1835, 257. Joseph Smith Papers.

⁶ Minutes, 3 October 1835, 126. Joseph Smith Papers.

John was ordained a seventy and served in the Second Quorum of the Seventy until being called as one of the Seven Presidents of the Seventy on April 6, 1837. His service in the presidency ended six months later. Nathan Tanner explained:

An article was drawn up by Brother Gould ... and presented to the Seventies assembled in the upper story of the Temple for their sanction. It declared that the Seventies disapproved of the circulating of Kirtland money in any way, or the passing of it; and that they would disfellowship, disapprove of, and raise their hand against all such parties whoever or wherever they may be. This article was to be printed and sent out the next day to the four winds.⁷

The article was rejected on the basis it was a vote “against the Heads of the Church.” On September 3, 1837, John was “objected to” as a president of the Seventy.⁸ From this point on, his affiliation with the Church was tentative. By 1846 he was residing in Knoxville, Illinois, and affiliating with an apostate church organized by James J. Strang. John died in 1855 at age seventy-two.

⁷ Nathan Tanner Autobiography, typescript, 55. L. Tom Perry Special Collections, Harold B. Lee Library, Brigham Young University, Provo, UT.

⁸ Nathan Tanner Autobiography, typescript, 55.