

Hard Questions in Church History

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1836-1838 Trials in Missouri

Questions to Consider

- Why did the Lord command them to build Zion when it He knew it would fail?
- Why were the Saints continually promised a better life, but it just got worse?
- Why did the Kirtland Saints continue to gather to Missouri when it was clearly a place of persecution?

Timeline

1831		
	July	Colesville Saints arrive as first group in Jackson County, Missouri.
	Aug	Joseph Smith and Sidney Rigdon arrive in Jackson County; Sidney Rigdon dedicates Missouri for the gathering of the Saints; Joseph Smith dedicates the temple site in Independence.
1832		
	Mar	<i>In Ohio, Joseph is tarred and feathered</i>
	Apr	Joseph Smith journeys to Jackson Co. MO for second time, carries paper for printing revelations
	Dec	Approximately 800 Latter-day Saints live in Jackson County in five branches.
1833		
	Jul	Jackson County citizens distribute a "secret constitution."
	Jul 2	<i>In Ohio, Joseph finishes first draft of his "New Translation" of the Bible.</i>
	Jul 20	Mobs destroy Saints' printing establishment in the process of publishing the Book of Commandments.
	Jul 23	Mobs attack; six elders offer their lives for the safety of the Saints.
	Nov 4	The Saints expelled from Jackson County after a "Bloody Day"; houses are burned; Saints surrender their weapons and move out of Jackson County to Clay, Ray and Lafayette Counties. The mobs captured the saints' Ferry on the Blue River. In the ensuing fight at least two saints returned fire which killed two Missourians and a few horses. Rumors and lies spread, a battle broke out and saints died, others were miraculously healed. Mobs burned houses, haystacks and barns.
	Nov 5-6	Saints leave Jackson County and disperse to neighboring counties. Most board the ferry into Clay County.
1834		
	May-Jun	Zion's Camp, encompasses a total of 207 men who gathered in Missouri to restore the Saints to their lands of inheritance in Jackson County. Hostilities rise and Joseph prophesies that their contention will bring God's judgement. The Lord commanded no fighting, and set forth conditions to redeem Zion (D&C 105). A hail storm protected the camp from the Missourians. As the camp disbands, cholera breaks out.
1835		
	Feb 14	The Twelve Apostles and Quorum of the Seventy organized (the later all from Zion's Camp).
1836		
	Mar 27	<i>Kirtland Temple Dedicated</i>
	Dec	Caldwell County created for the MO saints. Begin developing the city of Far West, Caldwell Co., MO.
1837		
		Joseph visits the Saints in Far West, MO.

		National Bank failure, including the Kirtland Safety Society. Apostasy of those who blamed Joseph (200-300 or ~10% of the Kirtland Saints).
	Jun	First Missionaries leave for Great Britain. They find great success. Joseph said: “Some of the old prophets travelled and dedicated that land [England], and their blessings fell up you” (<i>Life of Heber C. Kimball</i> , 105)
	Jul 3	Far West Temple excavation begins with a few men and boys digging trenches 5 feet deep, 110’ x 80’, using axes and shovels. When Joseph hears of it, he asks them to wait until the Lord commands them to begin. Nine months later, the Lord instructs them not to go into debt, but they may begin (D&C 115:8).
1838		
	Jan 12-Mar 14	Joseph and Sidney flee enemies in Kirtland. They meet up with their families shortly thereafter (both Emma and Phebe expecting, and traveling with their combined eleven children).
	Apr 26	D&C 115 directs the building of a temple in Far West, Caldwell Co.
	Jun 19	Sidney Rigdon gives “Salt Sermon” attacking those dissenters of the church who persecuted the Saints.
	Jul 4	Sidney Rigdon gives patriotic “Independence Day” speech, including threats if the Missourians attack.
	Jul 8	D&C 116, 117, 118, 119, 120 , Apostles called to serve “over the great waters” (D&C 118:4).
	Jul-Oct	Kirtland Camp journeys about ~900 miles from Kirtland to northern Missouri.
	Aug 6	Election Day at Gallatin, Daviess County; Saints are restrained from voting; fight at the poles.
	Oct 27	Missouri Governor Lilburn W. Boggs issues the Extermination Order.
	Oct-Nov	Battles in DeWitt, Crooked River (David Patten killed), Davies Co., and Massacre at Haun’s Mill.
	Oct 31	Joseph surrenders to Missouri militia outside of Far West; Joseph and 63 leaders charged with treason, murder, and other crimes leading to their imprisonment in Richmond, Ray County.
	Dec 1-Apr 15	Joseph, Hyrum, Lyman Wight, Caleb Baldwin, Alexander McRae moved to Liberty Jail for 4 months. (Sidney and his daughter are there for two months before released do to illnesses.)

1831-1833—Missouri Review from Previous Lectures

From July 1831 to October 1838 Latter-day Saints sought to build Zion in Missouri. Establishing a Zion society was extremely difficult. In contrast to the glorious revelations that accompanied the Kirtland Temple dedication, the Saints in Missouri struggled on many fronts—in part from mobs, and in part from pride and a lack of following the prophet. During the two years following the dedication of the Kirtland Temple, 1836 to 1838, both gathering places of the Saints suffered from greed, speculation, and anger.

In addition to these internal problems, the external persecution was just around the corner. Yet, repeatedly the Lord warned them not to fight back but to lift a standard of peace,

If men will smite you, or your families, once, and ye bear it patiently and revile not against them, neither seek revenge, ye shall be rewarded . . . the second time . . . third time . . . they should not go out unto battle against any nation, kindred, tongue, or people, save I, the Lord, commanded them . . . And I, the Lord, would fight their battles (D&C 98:23-37; also see D&C 105:14; etc.)

The Lord warned the Missouri saints in 1831 that Zion’s glory would only come “after much tribulation” (D&C 58:4). The Lord promised He would fight their battles if they would purify themselves and live as a Zion society—becoming pure in heart with no poor among them (Moses 7:18). Initially, the Latter-day Saints followed the Lord’s command to not fight back for most of 1831-

1837. Yet the Lord justified the Saints defending themselves after forgiving their attackers three or four times. By 1838 the Saints felt justified in defending their lands and lives.

In addition to greed and a loss of divine focus, the Saints in Missouri suffered from communication challenges. Young local leadership mistakes, as well as deliberate wolves attacking the young sheep led to God's punishments being poured out as well. By 1838, six-and-a-half-years after the first Saints moved from Colesville to establish their homes in Missouri, The Lord commanded Joseph to move his family to Missouri. The church hoped to be gathered to one place and the majority of the Ohio Saints formed the Kirtland Camp to travel southwest.

By January 1838, after seven years of trying to oversee two groups of Saints ~900 miles apart, the Lord directed Joseph to move his family to Missouri. This fulfilled the prophecy given in September 1831, when the Lord warned Joseph that Kirtland, Ohio was only a short-term stopping ground. It would only be "a strong hold . . . for the space of five years" (D&C 64:21). According to that prophecy, the move was part of the Lord's plan. After the Prophet Joseph and Emma left Kirtland, they asked the Ohio Saints to join them in Missouri, and most did.

Clashes with Neighbors

Ever since the Saints were driven from Jackson County, on November 5th and 6th 1833, they hoped to work through the law to return to Jackson County as the Lord directed (D&C 98:23-38; 101:76; and in 1834, 105:25). That did not happen. By 1836 their numbers had grown far larger than the initial approximately 1,200 religious refugees who were welcomed into Clay County. The steady stream of thousands of Saints each year, overwhelmed the Missourians who saw them as a political threat and religious foreigners.

In 1833, when the citizens of Clay County welcomed the Saints as religious refugees, they shared the mutual hope that the Saints would leave soon and return to Jackson County. But after nearly three years, they had overstayed their welcome. With triple the numbers, and now evidence of departure, the local "gentiles" become less welcoming.

In the Spring of 1836, Bishop Partridge and W. W. Phelps knew of the communal unrest and began looking for another place for the growing number of Saints to gather. On May 3, 1836 they purchased 1,600 acres of land about forty miles north of Liberty, Clay County. The land was barren because there it did not have many trees. This was interpreted at the time as uninhabitable, but the Satins were willing to give it a try.

Eight weeks later, on June 29, 1836 Clay County citizens held a meeting and expressed their frustrations over the refugee Saints extended stay. They highlighted five objections to the Saints living in their community:

They were:

1. Poor
2. Religiously different
3. Eastern in their customs and dialect
4. Opposed to Slavery
5. Solicitous of the Native Americans, as God's chosen people, to inherit the land with them.

When the church leaders told the local leaders that they would start moving to their newly purchased lands near Shoal Creek, they came to a “covenant of peace” (*Church History in the Fullness of Times*, 182).

Some Saints proposed a move to Wisconsin, but the Prophet and the majority of the Saints felt strongly that this is where the Lord called them, so they continued to try again over and over in at least eight different counties between 1831-1838.

Alexander Doniphan Our Hero

Starting in 1833, the church was defended by an excellent and compassionate attorney, Alexander Doniphan (1808-1887). In addition to defending the Saints property disputes with their “gentile” neighbors in Jackson County in 1833, he again came to our defense in 1836. The Saints had been refugees in Clay County for three years without being allowed back in Jackson County. Another solution was needed.

Doniphan served in the state General Assembly at that time and was instrumental in an advocating with the State of Missouri to establish a new county just for the Saints. It would allow for their protection, and not offend any neighbors. Governor Dunklin was not willing to help, but 1836 was an election year. He lost the election, and the new Governor, Lilburn W. Boggs, signed the bill creating two new neighboring counties on December 29, 1836. Caldwell County was created exclusively for the Saints—with a six-mile buffer zone around it—and it included the 1,600 acres the church had purchased. The second, Daviess County, was due north where many Saints would move in 1838, into the Adam-on-di-Ahman stake (CES, *Church History in the Fullness of Times*, 182).

The *Missouri Encyclopedia* explains Doniphan’s role as a mediator in the in “Mormon-Missouri War of 1838.”

Doniphan entered the Missouri State Militia, accepting a commission as brigadier general of the Western Division. Although this marked the beginning of his military career, he did not know that he would soon cross paths with the Mormons once again. The rapid growth of Caldwell County, and the Mormons’ movement into surrounding counties, had brought tension to the western part of the state. A series of incidents, in which both sides were at fault, erupted violently in August 1838 during an election at Gallatin, in Daviess County, north of the Mormon-controlled Caldwell County. By early September the countryside was ablaze with anti-Mormon sentiment (<https://missouriencyclopedia.org/people/doniphan-alexander-w.>).

Not all historians blame the Saints for the eruption at Gallatin, but certainly, other incidents—including Sidney Rigdon’s two rousing speeches in June and July—and dissenters initiating lies against the Saints, added fuel to the mobs’ fire. Thankfully, Alexander Doniphan defended Joseph, and other church leaders, multiple times.

On November 2, 1838 while Doniphan served as a Brigadier General in the “Mormon War,” his superior commander, General Samuel Lucas, commanded him to execute Joseph Smith and his peers, but Doniphan refused: “It is cold blooded murder I will not obey your order. ... [I]f you execute these men, I will hold you responsible before an earthly tribunal, so help me God” (Smith, *History of the Church*, 3:190-191). Alexander Doniphan was so beloved by Joseph and Emma, that they named their son after him Alexander Hale, who was born that same year on June 2, 1838. Caldwell County became a great short-term solution, but by 1838 tensions ignited more clashes.

Missouri Leadership

On July 7, 1834, Joseph called one of the three witnesses, David Whitmer, as the first Stake President in Missouri. Sometimes this calling was referred to as President of the Missouri church. Pres. Whitmer began thinking of Missouri and Kirtland as two independent bodies. He saw himself as equal to or above Joseph in Missouri, not as one who needed to report to the prophet. At times he was upset when Joseph intervened and felt he should not be subordinate to any higher power. In one extreme example, Pres. Whitmer set up a court to try Joseph and Oliver for something that happened when they came down to visit Missouri. Pres. Whitmer's pride and lack of cooperation led to him to reject Joseph as the prophet by 1838.

On April 13, 1838, David Whitmer and Lyman Johnson were excommunicated for not sustaining their leaders among other things. One or two days earlier, David's brother-in-law, Oliver Cowdery was excommunicated. The court record for Oliver's membership listed ten problems (six of which dealt with his new profession as an attorney). I presume he would not have been excommunicated today, but the Missouri church acted more rashly on these matters than we do now. Even Oliver said that if Joseph had been there none of this would have happened. Fortunately, Oliver reunited himself with the church again decade later, but David—nor the other Whitmer family members—returned to the church in their lifetimes.

It was heartbreaking for Joseph to arrive in Missouri in March and find three of his closest friends leaving the church. Many Saints felt remorse as well. Elizabeth Barlow mourned, "We all felt more sorrowful at seeing Apostles leave the Church than we did over our trials and persecutions" (*Church History in the Fulness of Times*, 190).

David Whitmer	
1831, Oct. 25	Ordained a high priest by Oliver Cowdery, at Orange, Ohio
1831	Traveled to Jackson Co., Missouri, with Harvey G. Whitlock
1833, Nov	Driven from Jackson Co. by vigilantes, relocated in Clay Co., Missouri
1834, July 7	Appointed Stake President of church in Missouri
1834, Sept	Left for Kirtland; stockholder in Kirtland Safety Society
1837	Moved to Far West, Caldwell Co., MO
1838, Feb 5-9	Rejected as church president in Missouri at meeting in Far West, Caldwell Co.
1838, Apr 13	Excommunicated
1838, June	Expelled from Far West
1838	Moved to Clay Co. then Richmond, Ray Co., and operated a livery stable.
1847	Ordained by William E. McLellin to preside over McLellinite Church of Christ
1867-68	Elected mayor of Richmond
1866	Joseph III receives revelation to start Reorganized Church of Jesus Christ
1876	Whitmer Reorganized Wm McLellin's 1847 Church of Christ (Whitmerite) by ordaining his nephew as First Elder.
1881	Published a "Proclamation"
1887	Published "An Address to Believers in the Book of Mormon"
1888, Jan 25	Died at Richmond, Missouri

Many of the relationship problems with the Missourians may have been avoided if the Saints had been more unified, humble, more sensitive and better neighbors. With internal contention and external unrest, both sides made mistakes. Alex Baugh estimated 20% of the problems in the 1838 Missouri-Mormon war were due to members of the Church who acted in opposition to the Prophet and Lord's Commandments, and 80% to the mob and "gentile" violence.

Joseph and Emma Smith Move to Missouri—January-March 1838

On January 12, 1838, Joseph and Sidney fled the mobs in Kirtland. Their wives, Emma and Phebe, were left with the daunting task of packing what few belongings and food they could transport and join them with their children for a nine-hundred-mile exodus in the bitter cold of winter. Emma was in her first tri-semester of her pregnancy with Alexander Hale Smith, and had three small children under eight. Phebe Rigdon was also expecting had had eight living children with her. The journey was difficult, yet they found hope in joining with the other Saints in Missouri. It was Emma's first time to Missouri, and I presume that she enjoyed reunited with many friends who had moved there over the past six years. We can only hope that the Spirit filled them with strength. On Marc 13, 1838, the Smiths and Rigdons arrived in Caldwell County. Joseph was able to clarify the direction of the church.

Most of the other Saints in Kirtland joined the ~900-mile exodus south to Missouri over the next few months. In the spring Joseph's mother, Lucy Smith, recorded stories of traveling in a group with her daughter Catherine Smith Salisbury. She tells of the hardships of the rain, delivering babies on the way, deaths, miraculous healings, and more illness. The following excerpt is from Lucy's memoires of the first week of June 1838:

We lay all night ~~beneath~~ ^{<in>} the rain which descended in torrents and I being more exposed than the other females suffered much with the cold and upon getting up in the morning I found that a quilted skirt which I had worn the day before was wringing wet but I could [*sic*] not mend the matter by changing that for another for the rain was still falling and I wore it in this situation for 3 days in consequence of this I took a severe cold and was very sick so that when we arrived at the Missisipi [*sic*] ~~our~~ I was unable to sit up any length and could not walk without assistance ~~soon~~ after we crossed this river we stopped at a Negro hut a most unlovely place but we could go no farther here my grand daughter [*sic*] Katharine gave birth to a fine Girl which She called [blank](Anderson, *Lucy's Book*, 626-627; also www.josephsmithpapers.org/paper-summary/lucy-mack-smith-history-1844-1845/182)

Lucy left the name of her grandbaby blank—perhaps because she had the gender wrong. The baby born June 7, 1838 and was actually a son whom they named Alvin.

Once the Saints arrived in the safety of the Caldwell County, their problems did not end. The feeling of gathering together again brought happiness for a time. But the next six months were laden with more persecution and more travels. It took its toll on many. Lucy's memoires are filled with her faith and trust in the Lord that He would bless their future.

The Prophet spoke each Sunday during the spring and summer of 1838. On July 8, the Lord gave Joseph four revelations, one of which revealed who would fill the vacancies in leadership—including four new apostles: John Taylor, John E. Page, Wilford Woodruff, and Willard Richards. Their call included an assignment to serve missions in England (D&C 118—we will cover this in another lesson).

Adam-ondi-Ahman—D&C 116

In mid-May 1838 Joseph and others continued to explore more land for the arriving Saints. The neighboring new Davies County had many potential options near the church headquarters (Far West, Caldwell County). The land there had not been surveyed, so it would only cost \$1.25 per acre once the government was ready. Joseph saw a potential unoccupied parcel of land with a good water supply

to build another city in Davies County along the Grand River. Of his first visit to the area, Joseph wrote:

Friday, 18th.—I left Far West, in company with Sidney Rigdon . . . and many others, for the purpose of visiting the north country, and laying off a stake of Zion. . . . We passed a beautiful country of land, a majority of which is prairie [untimbered land], and thickly covered with grass and weeds, among which is plenty of game; such as deer, turkey, hen, elk, etc. . . . We have nothing to fear in camping out, except the rattlesnake, which is natural to this country, though not very numerous [*sic*].

Saturday, 19th. . . . Grand River is a large, beautiful, deep and rapid stream, during the high waters of spring, and will undoubtedly admit of steamboat navigation and other water craft We pursued our course up the river, mostly in the timber, about eighteen miles, when we arrived at Colonel Lyman Wight's, who lives at the foot of Tower Hill (a name I gave it in consequence of the remains of an Old Nephite altar or tower), where we camped for the Sabbath. In the afternoon I went up the river about half a mile to Wight's Ferry, . . . for the purpose of selecting and laying claim to a city plat . . . which the brethren call Spring Hill; but by the mouth of the Lord it was named Adam-ondi-Ahman, because, said he, it is the place where Adam shall come to visit his people, or the Ancient of Days shall sit, as spoken of by Daniel the Prophet (Robert J. Mathews, "Adam-ondi-Ahman" *BYU Studies*, 31.1; 1972; citing RLDS History, 2:153–54)

While looking at the site, the Prophet received a revelation that this site would be the future location of a great gathering of dispensational leaders to return their keys to Adam "the Ancient of Days" who will preside (D&C 116). Lyman Wight already lived there, and hundreds more soon came. The Lord named it "Adam-ondi-Ahman," which in Adamic means, "where Adam dwelt." The revelation refers to where "Adam shall" come in the future. Yet other references from Joseph and second or third hand suggest that the land may also have been where Adam dwelt previously (www.churchofjesuschrist.org/study/ensign/1994/01/i-have-a-question/what-do-we-know-about-the-location-of-the-garden-of-eden?lang=eng).

On February 18, 1855 Elder Orson Pratt shared his memories from the Prophet Joseph's teachings on the Adamic name:

"What is the name of God in the pure language?" The answer says, "Ahman." "What is the name of the Son of God?" Answer, "Son Ahman—the greatest of all the parts of God excepting Ahman." "What is the name of men?" "Sons Ahman," is the answer.

There is much debate over what Joseph saw and meant by the things he saw in Adam-ondi-Ahman. There are reports of Nephite towers, Adamic altars and walls and more. The question of the historicity of all these things is legitimate as the exact words of Joseph Smith himself are few, and many of the reports come decades later. One example comes from an interview between John Taylor and Abraham O. Smoot at Smoot's home in December of 1881. Smoot was one of those who joined later in Adam-ondi-Ahman. He was not there at the beginning of the survey, but joined the survey team later. John Taylor interviews Smoot on his recollection:

Question by President Taylor: Brother Smoot, did you see on the top of a hill, in a place called Adam-ondi-Ahman, the remains of what Joseph Smith said had been an altar built by Adam, upon which he offered sacrifice?

Ans. Yes, sir. I first saw it in 1837, and the spring of 1838, when assisting to survey the town called by that name.

Quest. What was the condition of the stones of which the altar had been built.

Ans. I remember well. The stones which lay scattered around looked as though they had been torn from a wall.

Quest. Yes, my remembrance is too that the stones were scattered as you say they were, having no particular form, except in one place. You remarked that you helped to make the survey; and prior to this particular conversation you told me that you assisted in making an excavation.

Ans. Yes, sir. I helped to excavate around the base of the altar, some 2 to 3 feet, and from 6 to 8 feet in length, which was sufficient to thoroughly satisfy us that the foundation of the wall was still there (Leland H. Gentry, “Adam-ondi-Ahman: A Brief Historical Survey,” in *BYU Studies*, 566-567).

Others reported Nephite towers, additional altars or walls of Adam or more (Lamar Barrett, “Adam-ondi-Ahman,” *Encyclopedia of Mormonism*, vol 1, 119-20). Heber C Kimball spoke of three altars similar to the altars in the Kirtland temple; other accounts cast more doubt (Gentry, *BYU Studies*, 570-572). Over time, there were questions as to whether the sites represented historical Edenic artifacts or post-Eden. There is no clarity on these subjects. All that we can really say is that we know where Adam will come to point.

Squatter’s Rights

There were no laws that prohibited the Saints from spreading beyond Caldwell Count and living in other counties. By early June, 1838 Joseph and others surveyed the land in Davies County for a new city called, Adam-ondi-Ahman. The new settlement was made available for the group of Saints coming from Kirtland under the direction of Joseph’s uncle, John Smith. Between 1,500 and 2,000 gathered there hoping to build homes. On June 28, 1838, a new stake, called Adam-ondi-Ahman, was organized there with the prophet’s uncle John Smith serving again as a stake president. Pres. John called Reynolds Cahoon and Lyman Wight as counselors.

The Saints who wanted to settle on their own land filed preemption land claims—akin to squatter rights—which allowed them to claim, occupy, and improve up to 160 acres without payment. Later, when the government would sell the land, the individual claiming the preemption had a first right to purchase the land for \$1.25/acre. For the penurious immigrating Saints, this was ideal: they could file a preemption claim and legally settle on the land without having to pay for it until later that year. And in their industrious fashion they got to work clearing and improving the land. Houses went up quickly, yet before everyone had time to move out of their tents into permanent structures, the Saints were driven out of Adam-ondi-Ahman in October of that same year. The Missourians who pushed them out knew that in the pre-emption claims would allow them to take over the Saints properties. When the Saints were expelled, members of the mob acquired the improved land for themselves.

Salt to the Wound

By June 1838, President Sidney Rigdon's frustration at the harassments from apostates exploded in a sermon which became known as the "Salt Sermon." He denounced the dissenters and asked them to leave the body of the saints if they could not be civil neighbors. He cited the Lord's Sermon on the Mount, "if the salt have lost his savour . . . it is thenceforth good for nothing, but to be cast out, and trodden under foot of men" (Mt 5:13). Sidney's sermon followed by more extreme behaviors added to anti-Mormon hostility.

July 4, 1838, the Saints gathered at the Far West Temple site to dedicate it. One of the speeches became famous. President Rigdon spoke again publicly extolling the nation's rights, and then attacked the enemies of the church. Years later, the man who printed Sidney's sermon, Ebenezer Robinson, said that Joseph Smith reviewed and approved the sermon before it's publication. The talk was carefully prepared we do not know how carefully the Prophet Joseph approved in August 1838.

We have other evidence the Prophet shared—in a limited sense—Sidney's sentiments. Joseph gave a sermon shortly after Sidney's "salt sermon" where he also threatened, "if the people would let him alone[,] he would conquer them by the sword of the Spirit, but if they would not he would beat the plow shears into swords & their pruning hooks into spears & conquer them" (*josephsmithpaper.org*). However, Joseph never expressed the extreme threatening's that Sidney did.

By late summer 1838, the flood of immigrating Saints caused even more concern about disrupting the political and religious balance within the area. Sidney Rigdon's July 4, 1838 speech had a similar effect as pouring gasoline on a low burning fire. With a dramatic flair that was popular at the time, Sidney thundered:

It shall be between us and them a war of extermination, for we will follow them, till the last drop of their blood is spilled, or else they will have to exterminate us . . . Neither will we indulge any man, or set of men, in instituting vexatious law suits against us, to cheat us out of our just rights, if they attempt it we say wo be unto them. We this day then proclaim ourselves free, with a purpose and a determination, that never can be broken, no never! *no never!!* NO NEVER!!!

Many historians have wondered if Sidney suffered bouts similar to manic-depression, exacerbated by his brain injury after being tarred and feathered in 1831. His sermon is used as evidence of a potential manic phase (Howard K. Harper, Steven C. Harper, and David P. Harper, (2002) "Van Wagoner's Sidney Rigdon: A Portrait of Biographical Excess," *Review of Books on the Book of Mormon 1989–2011*: Vol. 14 .1 , Article 14).

The Missouri problem was understandable for both perspectives. Missouri neighbors worried about the constant stream of growing numbers of the Saints—whom they disagreed with religiously and culturally. The Saints were exhausted from repeated abuse. But by voicing threats, they ignited more mob violence. In seven years the Saints had grown from a few hundred to over ten thousand in a few counties in Missouri. The other local Missourians saw them as a threat to their political balance—especially in Davies County at the election in Galtian on Monday, August 6, 1838.

In 1838, the increased migration of thousands of Latter-day Saints to Missouri triggered animosity by the Missourians. The malcontent had risen to raids, abuse, rapes, and burning of the Saints' homes. However, that was only part of the problem. Dissenters of the church from Ohio and Missouri, which left the loyal church members to battle problems within and without of their community.

A community of Latter-day Saint men formed a secret organization to defend the Saints. The beginning roots started earlier, calling themselves, "Brothers of Gideon," and then "Daughters of Zion." In those early days, Jared Carter helped organize the group to protect themselves. We have no evidence that the group ever received the sanction to be a military group, but acted as extra-legal fighters. They felt justified because the state would not protect their families and lands, so they united to protect themselves.

It appears that the Prophet Joseph knew of the group, but he did not know of the extent of their lawless plans. He referenced them in a meeting or two, but spoke against unlawful behaviors. Joseph referred to them as the Danites from the Bible. However, it was not until he was in Liberty Jail that he learned of their criminal past. One of their worst attacks fell in the early fall of 1838 when the Danites drove out every non-Latter-day Saints in Davies County.

During the summer of June 1838, spurred on by Sidney Rigdon's June 19th, "Salt Sermon" on the Danites physically chased the decenters and their families out of the county in a short time. They were fed up with the dissenters—including the Whitmers, Oliver Cowdery, W.W. Phelps, among other dozens. In a limited sense, they repeated the same behaviors that mobs had initially used against the Saints. They excused themselves as they tried "to put to right physically that which is not right" (Alex Baugh, "We have a Company of Danites in these Times": The Danites, Joseph Smith, and the 1838 Missouri-Mormon Conflict," *Journal of Mormon History*, vol. 45, no. 3, 2019).

By the summer of 1838, a convert of three years, Sampson Avard, became a Danite leader. He led the group to join his secret sinister plans to commit criminal actions. The men followed in part because Sampson claimed that he was directed to do so by "The Presidency." Later when the Prophet learned of this, he denounced Sampson's claim and the secret plans of the Danites. Joseph also removed him from his position. Sampson's anger and lies continued. On November 12, 1838, he became a major witness against Joseph and several other leaders at a court in Richmond, Missouri.

Sampson had tried to flee Missouri, but the militia had captured him and threatened to prosecute him if he refused to testify against the prisoners [Joseph and 63 other men]. Eager to save himself, Sampson claimed that everything he had done as a Danite had been done under orders from Joseph (*Saints*, vol. 1; 369).

That court hearing led to Joseph's four months of incarceration through the winter of 1838 and 1839 in Liberty Jail, Clay County, Missouri. On March 17, 1839, Sampson Avard was excommunicated.

The Danites were a short-lived, unauthorized organization. Yet, through the years some have portrayed the Danites as a prophetic sanctioned organization of armed men bound to hurt or kill their non-Mormon neighbors (David J. Whittaker, "Danites," in Daniel H. Ludlow, ed., *Encyclopedia of Mormonism* [NY: MacMillan, 1992], 1:356). Sadly, this group has been blown out of perspective and history. They were instrumental in igniting animosity that began the Missouri-Mormon War in the fall of 1838.

Apostolic Mission to Great Britain—D&C 118 (July 8, 1838)

On July 8, 1838 the Lord instructed the Prophet Joseph to call— John Taylor, John E. Page, Wilford Woodruff, and Willard Richards—as new apostles of the Lord Jesus Christ (D&C 118:6). In the same revelation, the apostles were told to leave for a mission to Great Britain on April 26, 1839 from the Far West Temple site in Missouri. Looking ahead nine months we see that Brigham Young and others felt strongly about fulfilling this prophecy exactly. This is will be addressed in a later lesson focusing on the British Mission.

Gallatin Election—August 6, 1838

The Saints felt strongly about the principles of the United States Constitution and their right to vote. However they disagreed with other Missourians on political issues like slavery, Native American rights, etc. The delicate balance of the nation’s slave states made elections in Missouri all the more important. Locally, Galitan hoped to become the county seat. With only two houses though, and Adam-on-di-Ahman boasting over 200, other citizens of Davies County feared the “Mormon” competition.

On voting day in Gallatin, one of the candidates who was running for election learned the Saints would not be voting for him. He gathered some friends and stood guard over the polls, forbidding any Saint to vote. Lucy remembered that one brave soul was not detoured:

One of the brethren <named John Butler> however stepped up to the polls without paying any attention to them and voted whereupon a man belonging to the adverse party struck him a severe blow[.] John Butler was a very high spirited man and could not brook such treatment as this consequently [*sic*] the blow was returned with a force that brought his antagonist to the ground but 4 others of the same party came to the assistance of the fallen man and shared his fate for Mr Butler was a man of extraordinary strength and when so excited was not easily overcome (Anderson, *Lucy’s Book*, 631; or <https://www.josephsmithpapers.org/paper-summary/lucy-mack-smith-history-1844-1845/185>).

Lucy’s account is completely different than the account the mob circulated. They claimed that the Prophet had come to the polls and shot seven people. They claimed Joseph “would collect his church together and exterminate them people who did not belong to his church” (Reed C. Durham, Jr., “The Election Day Battle at Gallatin” *BYU Studies*, vol 13.1). This news of the fighting in Gallatin spread like a wild fire.

A few days later, a large company of armed men in military uniforms came to arrest Joseph Smith. The Prophet and his mother were together when eight men approached her home. She invited the officers in:

When they entered they placed themselves in a menacing standing in a line like a rank of soldiers across the room and when when I requested them to sit down they replied we do not choose to sit we have come here to kill <Joe Smith and all> the Mormons— Ah said <I> what has Joseph Smith done that you should want to kill him They said that he had murdered 7 men in Davies County ~~the~~ and that they were sent to kill him and all the Mormons . . . The men disputed me . . . “and I’ll be d—m—d if I <we> do not execute our orders”— then you are going to kill me with the rest ~~said~~ I suppose said I Yes we will he replied— very well I answered but I want you act like gentlemen about it and do the job quick just Shoot me down at once for then it will be but a moment till I shall be perfectly happy . . .

Joseph continued writing <till now> but hav<ing> ~~had~~ <now> finished ~~and seal~~ his letter ~~and~~ <he> asked me for ~~some sea~~ <a wafer> to seal it ~~I saw~~ <seeing> that he was at liberty ~~I turning~~ <turned> to them & I said gentlemen I suffer me to make you acquainted with Joseph Smith the prophet he looked upon them with a very pleasant smile and stepping up to them gave each of them his hand in a manner which convinced them that he was neither a guilty criminal nor yet a cowering hypocrite. They stopped and stared as though a Spectre had crossed their path. Joseph sat down and entered into conversation with them and explained to them the views and feelings of the people called Mormons and what their course had been

Lucy recorded their conversation. Finally Joseph stood up to leave:

Mother I believe I will go home Emma will be expecting me— two of the men sprang to their feet saying you shall not go alone for it is not safe we will go with you and guard you[.] Joseph thanked them and they went with him the remainder of the officers stood by the door ~~the~~ while these were absent and <I over heard> the following conversation between them

1. officer. ~~How~~ did you <not> feel <strangely> when Smith took you by the hand? ~~I did~~ I never felt so in my life

2 Officer [*sic*]. ~~Nor I either~~ I felt as though I could not move I would not harm one hair of that man's head for the whole world

3 officer. This is the last time you will ever catch me coming to kill Joe Smith or the Mormons (ibid).

However others were not so easily won over and mob violence escalated again.

Violence Escalates August-November 1838

In addition to the skirmish at the Galtian election polls, there were other uprising against the members of the church in other towns. Alex Baugh recorded:

During a period of nearly four months, from August through the end of November, seven major confrontations or military campaigns took place which included the following: (1) the confrontation between Mormons and Missouri vigilantes in Daviess County, including the intercession made by regional militia (August through mid-September); (2) the Latter-day Saint defense of the Mormon population residing in Carroll County against county regulators, and the response of the regional militia to the disturbances (August through October 10); (3) the burning of Millport and Gallatin and the expulsion of the non-Mormon residents of Daviess County by Mormon militia (mid-October); (4) the encounter between Mormon and Missouri militia at Crooked River in Ray County (October 25); (5) the attack of the Mormon settlement of Haun's Mill by Missouri vigilantes (October 30); (6) the Mormon defense of Far West against vigilante and state militia forces (October 28–31); and (7) the Mormon surrender and the military occupation conducted by authorized militia (November 1–29). (Alexander L. Baugh, "Joseph Smith in Northern Missouri," in *Joseph Smith the Prophet and Seer*, ed., Richard N. Holzapfel and Kent P. Jackson [Provo, UT: RSC, BYU; SLC: Deseret Book, 2010], 291-346.)

Exaggerated accounts reached local and state leaders. Without time and desire to check sources, the state called out the militia. In the next lesson we will look at Governor Lilian Boggs' executive order #44, which then gave rise to more mob violence. The Governor's order became known as the "extermination order," but it was not to kill every member of the church. The intent was for the Saints to leave Missouri. We have many documents that show that those who fought against the Saints took over their lands, which we will discuss in the next handout.

Further Sources

JosephSmithPapers.org; *BookofMormonCentral.org*. Daniel Ludlow, ed., *Encyclopedia of Mormonism*, "The Missouri Conflict," 1992. At least twenty articles in *BYU Studies Quarterly*—including: Clark Johnson, "The Missouri Redress Petitions: A Reappraisal of Mormon Persecutions I Missouri," 26.2; Richard Bushman, "Mormon Persecutions in Missouri 1833;" Reed Durham, Jr., "The Election Day Battle at Gallatin," 13.1; Richard Anderson, "New Data for Revising the Missouri Documentary History;" Mark McKiernan, "Sidney Rigdon's Missouri Speeches, 11:1;" Alma Blair, "The Haun's Mill Massacre," etc. Alexander Baugh, "We have a Company of Danites in these Times": The Danites, Joseph Smith, and the 1838 Missouri-Mormon Conflict," *Journal of Mormon History*, vol. 45, no. 3, 2019). *Saints*. Jeffery Walker, "Mormon Land Rights in Caldwell and Daviess Counties and the Mormon Conflict of 1838 New Findings and New Understandings," *BYU Studies*, 47; no. 1, 14-17).