
CONSECRATION AND CONTROVERSY: EZRA THAYER, LEMAN COPLEY, AND EARLY CONFLICTS OVER CONSECRATED PROPERTIES

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On 15 June 1831, just days before he and many other men left for a preaching mission to Missouri, Joseph Smith dictated a revelation that delivered a stinging rebuke to those named in it: “Hearken O ye people which Profess my name saith the lord your God,” the revelation thundered, “for Behold mine anger is kindled against the rebellious & they shall know mine arm & mine indignation in the day of visitation & of wrath upon the Nations & he that will not take up his cross & follow me & keep my commandments the same shall not be saved behold I the Lord commandeth & he that will not obey shall be cut off in mine own due time.”¹

Such sentiments could easily have been directed at the growing animus displayed by antagonists outside the faith group, such as Eber Howe, the quick-witted, sarcastic, and thoroughly adversarial

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editor of the *Painesville Telegraph*. Howe had been publishing mocking and dismissive views of the “Mormonites” and their faith since the earliest missionaries had arrived in northern Ohio, dismissing the sect’s founder, Joseph Smith, as a “pretender” and the leaders of the group as “imposters.”²

Yet this revelation was not directed at those who were opposing the rapidly growing sect in Kirtland, nor at unbelievers who rejected the evangelical believers’ preaching. The Lord’s wrath was instead directed at one of his own, Ezra Thayer, an unlikely target of such harsh words.

The early trajectory of Thayer’s Church membership held no portent for the need of such a biting reproof. By his own later account, though he had initially greeted the idea of Joseph Smith’s angelic communications and the Book of Mormon with great skepticism and wrath, Thayer had eventually relented. He attended a sermon delivered by Hyrum Smith and there obtained a copy of the Book of Mormon. Thayer’s conversion was not simply one of prayer and reasoning—he in fact claimed to have had several miraculous, visionary experiences in connection with his conversion and baptism, including a conversation with an angel. Soon it was Thayer who was organizing meetings where Joseph and Hyrum Smith and other early Saints could deliver their radical beliefs to the inquisitive upstate New York crowds. Thayer even held these evangelizing meetings in his own barn.³ Baptized by Parley Pratt in the fall of 1830, he was shortly thereafter one of the earliest converts to the Church to be called on a mission by a direct revelation.

That revelation calling Thayer to preach commanded him in the voice of the Lord to “open thy mouth & it shall be filled & thou shalt become even as Nephi of old who Journ[ey]ed from Jerusalem in the wilderness yea open thy mouth & spare not & thou shalt be laden with Sheaves upon thy Back for lo I am with you yea Open thy mouth & it shall be filled.”⁴ A few short months later, Thayer dutifully followed another command given to the Church for the believers to leave their

New York homes to gather with the newly converted members in the Kirtland area. Thayer was in Ohio by at least May 1831.

Joseph Smith had arrived in Kirtland in early February 1831 and within days dictated the revelation members of the Church then referred to as “the Law” or “the Laws of the Kingdom,” now known as Doctrine and Covenants 42. Among the many directives about proper obedience to commandments and sexual and social boundaries, the revelation also introduced a new economic system for the disbursement of properties among the members, a very timely instruction given the impending arrival of dozens of members from New York over the next several months who had literally “left” their properties behind without remuneration.

The words of the revelation declared,

Behold thou shalt consecrate all thy property properties that which thou hast unto me with a covenan[n]t and Deed which cannot be broken & they Shall be laid before the Bishop of my church . . . it shall come to pass that the Bishop of my church after that he has received the properties of my church that it cannot be taken from him you he shall appoint every man a Steward over his own property or that which he hath received in as much as shall be sufficient for him self and family & the residue shall be kept to administer to him that hath not that every man may receive according as he stands in need & the residue shall be kept in my store house to administer to the poor and needy as shall be appointed by the Elders of the church & the Bishop & for the purpose of purchasing Land & building up of the New Jerusalem.⁵

The efforts made to follow this revelation over the next several years revealed the logistical hurdles such consecrations would entail and pitted many between the natural tendency to hoard their own hard-earned resources for themselves against their devotion to their new, demanding faith.

Two early major consecrations of land in Ohio came from Lemam Copley, a converted Shaker, and Frederick G. Williams, a convert who had accompanied Oliver Cowdery and his group of missionaries to present-day Kansas in an attempt to convert the American Indian groups living there. In both cases, one of the key early problems with consecration would become clear. Neither Williams nor Copley actually signed over the deed of their property to the Church as the revelation instructed.

EZRA THAYER AND FREDERICK G. WILLIAMS'S FARM

In Williams's case, he did not own the land outright but rather still owed a substantial amount to the property's previous owner.⁶ Williams had obtained his Kirtland property, adjacent to the Peter French farm, prior to his joining the Church of Christ. In 1829 Williams had traded his farm in Warrensville, Ohio, for a farm belonging to Isaac Moore in central Kirtland. Though the farms were of comparable size, Moore's Kirtland holdings were more valuable, likely because of the structures already built on the land as well as its location in a more populated area. Williams's Warrensville ground was valued at \$1500 while Moore's Kirtland land stood at \$2000. Thus, after the swap Williams still owed \$500 on the land, a substantial sum in a world in which the average laborer might make merely \$1 per day.⁷ Nevertheless, as the newly destitute members of the church began to arrive in Kirtland, the Williams family made a substantial sacrifice and consecrated this Kirtland property to the Church for their settlement. Among the first to take advantage of so gracious a gift was the family of Joseph Smith Sr.

However, the previous owner of the Williams property, Isaac Moore, quickly became a thorn in the side of the growing Church. He apparently refused to vacate the home on the property and thereby create space for the arriving members to live. Moore likely justified

his actions on the grounds that he had not yet received the full payment for the property, though he already had received three-fourths of it. While that may have been Moore's justification, other sources indicate that his motivations were likely religious rather than purely economic.

Isaac Moore was considered a "leading member" of the Campbellite movement in the Kirtland area and made his land swap agreement with Frederick G. Williams when the latter was still a member of Sidney Rigdon's congregation that had been organized on Campbellite principles. By early 1831, Moore must have watched with growing disgust not only the dozens of Campbellites and others who left traditional Christianity for the Church of Christ, but Williams himself, who had converted and become a missionary for the Church. A later Campbellite historian specifically called out Moore's resistance to the Church of Christ when he explained the efforts made to arrest the spread of the heresy in the area, "The opposition to it was quick to its feet, in rank, and doing effective work to check the imposture. . . . Isaac Moore stood up, and became a shield to many."⁸ Indeed, another Campbellite later recalled that he and Isaac Moore had been the first to "battle" against the new faith and did so by attending a Church of Christ meeting and assailing the members' beliefs: "Brother Moore making the first speech & I the second the same evening in one of their meetings & the battle once begun we never ceased firing."⁹

The question of what to do about the problem on Frederick G. Williams's property led to a revelation dictated by Joseph Smith on 15 May 1831. This revelation is not well known today, primarily because while it was copied into the manuscript revelation books, it was not among those selected to be printed in either the Book of Commandments or the Doctrine and Covenants and remained unpublished during the nineteenth century. Though it would be left outside the published canon of the Church, there is no doubt it was treated as any other revelation of Joseph Smith at the time of its dictation. John Whitmer

noted that the revelation was given to Ezra Thayer and Joseph Smith Sr. “concerning a farm.”

Hearken unto my words & behold I will make known unto you what ye shall do as it shall be pleasing unto me for verily I say unto you it must needs be that ye let the bargain stand that ye have made concerning these farms untill it be so fulfilled Behold ye are holden for the one even so likewise thine advisory is holden for the other wherefore it must needs be that ye pay no more money for the present time untill the contract be fulfilled & let my Servent Joseph [Smith Sr.] & his family go into the House after thine advisory is gone & let my Servent Ezra board with him & let all the Brethren immediately assemble together & put up an house for my Servent Ezra & let my Servents Frederick's family remain & let the house be repaired & their wants be supplied & when my Servent Frederick returns from the west Behold he taketh his family to the west Let that which belongeth to my Servent Frederick be secured unto him by deed or bond & thus he willeth that the Brethren reap the good thereof let my Servent Joseph [Smith Sr.] govern the things of the farm & provide for the families & let him have help in as much as he standeth in need let my servent Ezra humble himself & at the conference meeting he shall be ordained unto power from on high & he shall go from thence (if he be obedient unto my commandments) & proclaim my Gospel unto the western regions with my Servents that must go forth even unto the borders of the Lamanit[e]s for Behold I have a great work for them to do & it shall be given unto you to know what ye shall do at the conferenc[e] meeting.¹⁰

Deemed an “adversary” by the voice of the Lord in this revelation, Moore with his intransigence may have been the primary catalyst for the revelation. The revelation directed that payments to Moore be stopped until he left the house on the property so that the Joseph and Lucy Mack Smith family could move into the home. Thayer was to

room with them there until a house would be erected by the Church for him on Williams's consecrated property.

To prevent future problems of this kind, the revelation also urged the men to "Let that which belongeth to my Servent Frederick be secured unto him by deed or bond," something that would require the balance on the farm to be paid off. Thayer was further promised that if he humbled himself he would receive greater power and authority at the upcoming conference and be sent on a mission.

At some point during this time, a \$100 payment was made on the Williams farm. It is likely that the promise of, or the threat of withholding, this payment motivated Isaac Moore to finally quit the property and fight against the believers in the Book of Mormon in other ways. Moore may also have been threatened with a lawsuit.¹¹

Ezra Thayer apparently made this payment from his own pocket. He may also have paid substantial funds to acquire building materials and seed for the property. For Thayer, it seemed a good arrangement; a house was to be built for him and until then he had a place to board, all good reasons for him to be willing to pay money toward the ultimate redemption of the balance on the land.

The trajectory of the next several weeks also suggests Thayer was fulfilling his duty exactly as the revelation had instructed. Indeed, just as the 15 May revelation promised, Thayer was among the men called up and ordained to the High Priesthood at the early June conference meeting.¹² Just days later, the second part of the promise came to fruition as Thayer was called to go with Thomas Marsh on a mission to Missouri.¹³

This call to travel the nearly one thousand miles to preach in Missouri was clearly asking a great deal, but it could not have come as a surprise to Thayer given the revelation he had received only a few weeks earlier. The fact that Thayer had been one of men to receive greater authority at the conference could only have portended to him that the calling to preach was also soon to be in the offing.

However, at this point Thayer apparently made demands that put him at odds with Joseph Smith. The hundred dollars he had paid was no small sum. It represented about one-third of the average laborer's annual salary.¹⁴ Thayer, possibly wondering how long it would be before he returned from a journey that promised to be two thousand miles at minimum, seems to have asked that the money he paid toward the consecrated Williams farm be returned to him. Failing that, he wanted some partial title to the land made out to him to secure his interests in it.

In making this request, Thayer demonstrated the limited understanding he, and likely many others, had in this newly enacted plan to consecrate properties. If Thayer had jointly purchased the property with Frederick G. Williams or with Joseph Smith Sr. under normal circumstances, then some kind of legal document showing his ownership in the jointly held property would have been reasonable and prudent. But this was not an ordinary property transaction. He was not merely contributing resources into a joint-stock company with the aim of settling members in Ohio, he was consecrating his money to the Church and thereby losing all claim to that money in the future.

Thayer likely did not simply make an inquiry to get his money back, receive a simple "no," and go about his business. The tenor of the condemnatory revelation dictated by Joseph Smith on 15 June 1831 suggests that Thayer had demanded that he receive his money back, or at least a title to the portion of the consecrated Williams farm that his contribution would have entitled him to. After declaring his wrath, the voice of the Lord in that revelation answered Thayer's inquiries emphatically:

Verily I say unto you that my servant Ezra Thayer must repent of his pride & his selfishness & obey the former commandment which I have given him concerning the place upon which he lives & if he will do this . . . he shall be appointed still to go to the land of Missorie otherwise he shall receive the money which he has paid & shall leave the place & shall be cut off out of my Church saith the Lord god of

host & though the Heavens & the Earth pass away these words shall not pass away but shall be fulfilled.¹⁵

Thayer's impulse to seek either to recover his money or to receive some claim to the land was deemed "pride and selfishness." The revelation further clarified that Thayer's proposed solution of dividing the Williams farm and deeding him over the portion he paid for was not going to happen: "there shall no divisions be made upon the land." The revelation then spoke to the Church generally, but the rebuke clearly included Thayer as well, "Wo! unto you rich men that will not give your substance to the poor for your riches will kanker your souls And this shall be your lamentation in the day of visitation & of Judgement & of indignation the Harvest is past the summer is ended & my soul is not saved."¹⁶

Thayer's initial reactions to this rebuke and the ultimatum that would revoke his membership if he still persisted in demanding his money is unknown. The 15 June 1831 revelation reassigned Thomas Marsh, his Missouri companion, to Selah Griffin. Yet, Thayer was not cut off from the Church. Instead, while many others were still on the arduous proselyting mission, Thayer and Smith Sr. both stood rebuked before a Church council in October 1831 for their conduct on the farm. Thayer had not even responded to the conference's call to attend the hearing. It is not clear from the scant minutes of the conference exactly what charges were leveled, what arguments were made, and the rationale for the decisions. However, whatever the details, Frederick Williams had returned from his mission and was very unhappy with the management of his former farm, apparently in relation to the failure of Joseph Smith Sr. and Ezra Thayer to build the promised home for the Williams's that the 15 May 1831 revelation had so ordered. It appears that Thayer's family had a place to live on the farm, but Williams's family did not, as the conference decided that Thayer's "family remain where they are until Spring . . . and Thayer be sharply rebuked for the disrespect with which he has treated this conference."¹⁷

The events incident to the consecration of Frederick G. Williams's farm demonstrated early in the process the problems that could and would arise when consecrated properties were not entirely possessed by the Church or when consecrators changed their minds. In particular, Isaac Moore had been able to frustrate and delay settlement on the farm because the deed to the land was not wholly secured before Williams had consecrated it.

For Thayer, he saw his consecrated money as specifically designated for property he was intending to live upon. Joseph Smith instead dictated a revelation that made clear that consecrated properties and moneys no longer fell under the economic purview of the consecrator. The consecrator was not buying a share in communal living arrangement; rather, he or she was demonstrating their faith by giving the property or money over to the Church without any strings attached. Thayer was given a choice: accept the fact that he had paid money to the larger project of consecration without remuneration or receive his money back and be cut off from the Church. The economic logistics associated with consecration, combined with opposition to the Church of Christ generally in Ohio, created many unforeseen difficulties as the Church attempted to implement a new economic order preparatory to building the New Jerusalem where there would be "no rich and no poor."

THE COPLEY ORDEAL

The problems involving Ezra Thayer and Williams's consecrated farm played out almost simultaneously to the second major failure of consecration in Ohio, that of Lemman Copley's much more massive landholdings in Thompson, Ohio. Like Thayer, Copley had become an enthusiastic convert by February 1831 and sought to demonstrate his zeal by offering up his substantial properties for the use of Church leaders even before the Law was received by revelation directing the consecration of properties.¹⁸

When Joseph Smith first arrived in Kirtland in the middle of the cold winter, he was essentially impoverished. Like so many of the New York Saints that would follow him, Smith had left his home and farm in behind in Pennsylvania without selling it, as the Church had been directed by an early January 1831 revelation. That revelation had pressed the urgency of the Church relocating to “the Ohio” by declaring that “they that have farms that cannot be sold let them be left or rented as seemeth them good.”¹⁹ Most pressing for Joseph’s family upon their arrival was the need for a place to stay. Lemam Copley, a recent convert to the Church from Shakerism, immediately stepped into the breach. Copley offered Joseph and Sidney Rigdon “to live with him & he would furnish them houses & provisions” on his substantial Thompson, Ohio, property.²⁰

Despite this tempting offer, Joseph did not immediately accept. Instead, as John Whitmer described in his manuscript heading of the revelation, “Joseph enquired of the lord.” That revelation, now known as Doctrine and Covenants 41, instead explained that houses should be built for Joseph Smith and Sidney Rigdon in Kirtland, and Copley’s generosity was, at least for a time, put on hold.²¹

Many more members in New York wrestled with the difficulties of abandoning or losing most of the value of their properties to obey the 2 January 1831 revelation. One resident of Waterloo disdainfully told a Palmyra newspaper that “this command was at first resisted by such as had property, but after a night of fasting, prayer and trial, they all consented to obey the holy messenger.”²² Further south, members in Colesville, New York, similarly had to make the difficult financial decision to sell out, if they could, and make the move to Ohio. Newel Knight later lamented, “As might be expected we were obliged to make great sacrifices of our property.”²³

Thus dozens of believers were on their way to Ohio in the late spring and early summer, many without the capital needed to purchase lands and rebuild in the new settlements. The necessity of the consecration

of properties as outlined in the “Law” revelation received in February was paramount. Responding to the revelation and the need, Leman Copley again offered up his land in Thompson to the Church, this time for the settlement of the dozens of Colesville Saints who began arriving in the Kirtland, Ohio, area after mid-May 1831. Newel Knight, a leader of the Colesville group, explained that upon their arrival in Kirtland, Ohio, “it was advised that the Coalesville Branch remain together and go to [a] neighboring town called Thompson as a man by the name Copley owned a considerabl tract of land there which he offered to let the Brethren occupy.”²⁴

As in the case of Frederick G. Williams’s farm, however, Copley does not seem to have owned the land outright. As such, though revelation instructed consecrated land to be deeded to the Church in full, Copley could not. A revelation received on 20 May 1831 described the importance of obtaining a deed of the land in the name of the Church, instructing Bishop Edward Partridge to “receive the money as it shall be laid before him according to the covenant & go & obtain a deed or Article of this land unto himself for I have appointed him to receive these things & thus through him the Properties of this Church shall be covenanted unto me.”²⁵ Joseph Knight Sr. in a later reminiscence similarly reflected that the revelation instructed the believers to “purchase a thousand acres of Land which was Claimed By Leman Copley and not paid for.”²⁶

Whether Copley would have signed the entirety of his property over to the Church to fulfill the revelatory requirements if he had owned the land outright cannot be known. In any case, this lack of clear title to the land, as had been the case with Frederick G. Williams’s farm, caused great difficulties for the gathering members of the Church as the emotional Copley began to have second thoughts about both his new religion in general and his promised consecration in particular.

Copley’s zeal for the Church of Christ in the spring of 1831 was reflected not only in his consecration of land, but he also manifested

an urgent desire to send missionaries among the Shakers with whom he had formally been associated at North Union, Ohio. John Whitmer noted in his history that Copley “was anxious that some of the elders should go to his former brethren and preach the gospel.” Joseph Smith’s history further explained that while Copley was “apparently honest hearted” in his desire to convert his Shaker friends, he “still retained ideas that the Shakers were right in some particulars of their faith.”²⁷ Such holdovers of previous beliefs are not surprising given Copley’s rapid and recent conversion to the Church and the nascent doctrinal understanding among most members living in Ohio in early 1831. Indeed, Joseph Smith’s revelations to this point had not directly commented on several Shaker beliefs that the Shaker community felt were central to proper Christian worship.

Chief among the Shaker doctrines was the belief in ultimate self-denial of the pleasures of the flesh. All sexual relations were forbidden, not simply those outside a marriage relationship. Converts to Shakerism were expected to “take up the cross” by abandoning previous sexual relationships and maintaining strict abstinence in the future. As one scholar has explained, “Shakers considered the sex drive a natural force of overwhelming power, a force that required all their mental and physical energies to keep at bay. Sex, as the source of all lust . . . became the ultimate form of selfishness, a totally asocial and anarchist force. Lust inverted the order of creation by making man bestial.”²⁸ Another explained, “The Shakers came to view the practice of celibacy as part of the reconstitution of true Christianity, which had been corrupted and plunged into apostasy in the centuries following the death of Jesus.”²⁹ While revelations dictated by Joseph Smith demanded that followers of Christ demonstrate their faith by consecrating their temporal properties to the kingdom of God, Shaker teachings insisted the true sacrifice and mark of a disciple involved denying the body any access to sexual pleasure.

The 7 May 1831 revelation dictated by Joseph Smith, calling Copley, Parley Pratt, and Sidney Rigdon to travel to the local Shaker community at North Union, Ohio, directly addressed the differences between Church of Christ beliefs on marriage and those maintained by the Shakers. Now known as Doctrine and Covenants 49, the revelation declared: “I say unto you that whoso forbideth to marry is not ordained of God for it is ordained of God unto man wherefore it is lawful that he should have one wife & they twain shall be one flesh & all this that the Earth might answer the end of its Creation & that it might be filled with the measure of man according to his creation before the world was made.”³⁰

When the revelation was read to the Shakers by the Church of Christ missionary delegation, it appears to have been rejected outright, at least according to Shaker sources. While the revelation refuted multiple points of Shaker doctrine, the Shaker response seemed to focus especially on the willingness of the Saints to marry and therefore engage in “animal” lusts through married sexual relations. Shaker willingness to commit to abstinence was considered so central to a life of true devotion to God that Shaker leaders scoffed at the idea that Sidney Rigdon or Parley Pratt could even pretend to be messengers from God when they were both married men.

When Pratt, for instance, responded to the outright rejection of the revelation by commencing to shake his coattails as a testimony against the community, the Shaker leader, Ashbel Kitchell reproved him along those lines of criticism, “You filthy Beast, dare you presume to come in here, and try to imitate a man of God by shaking your filthy tail; confess your sins and purge your soul from your lusts, and your other abominations before you ever presume to do the like again.” Kitchell turned to Copley and insinuated that Copley’s conversion to the Church of Christ was driven by his desire to return to married lusts. “You hypocrite,” Kitchell reproved, “you knew where the living work of

God was; but for the sake of indulgence, you could consent to deceive yourself and them.”

Shaken by this missionary failure among his former community, Copley turned against the Church of Christ and, more importantly, against the members that had been living on his consecrated property. Enlisting Kitchell’s aid, Copley demanded that the settlers not only leave his property, but pay him a fine for “damages” done to it. Joseph Knight Jr. recalled bitterly and sarcastically that they had been fined by Copley for “fitting up his houses and planting his ground.”³¹

In response to this eviction from Copley’s property of dozens of believers who had recently arrived from Colesville, New York, Joseph Smith dictated another revelation, now known as Doctrine and Covenants 54. Speaking of the revelation, John Whitmer said that “at this time the Church at Thompson Ohio was involved in difficulty, because of the rebellion of Lemam Copley. Who would not do as he had previously agreed. Which thing confused the whole church and finally the Lord spake unto Joseph Smith Jr the prophit.”³²

The revelation instructed the Colesville group to move on and undertake the arduous trek to Missouri, where renewed attempts at consecrated properties would be undertaken, also with mixed results. Copley, whose on-again, off-again belief in the Church would continue for several more years, was soundly condemned with phraseology echoing the New Testament declaration of Jesus, “wo to him by whom this offence cometh for it had been better for him that he had been drowned in the depth of the sea.”³³

The consecration of properties was among the most radical of doctrines introduced into the newly formed Church of Christ. For a religion that was already discarding the standard creeds and traditions of Protestantism with the introduction of new canon and the heralding of modern prophets, the consecration of properties went beyond theological professions of Christology or millennialism. This shared use of

lands and resources struck at the heart of American capitalist culture, and not merely in a theoretical way.

The belief that eventually a New Jerusalem would be erected as a city of God where only the righteous resided fueled the long-term necessity of laying out the unique property system in which the Church owned the titles to consecrated lands and granted stewardships over that land to believers. Those stewardships could then be rescinded from those who ceased believing, ensuring that the occupants of the land/city were always part of the covenant community preparing for the Second Coming of Christ. In the short term, the consecration of properties was a practical means to alleviate the pressing financial inequities among the members of the Church as New York members arrived in Ohio, often destitute after having left much of their previous wealth behind in answer to a prophetic injunction to move “to the Ohio.”

The consecration of properties combined with the decided attempt to gather the entire body of believers together in a single locale both exacerbated external tensions and fueled internal dissension, as these cases demonstrate. These two early major attempts to consecrate property for the use of the Church collapsed in one case and faltered and was slowed in another because the Church did not obtain a deeded title to the land outright from the consecrator. On Frederick G. Williams’s farm, the lack of clear title allowed external antagonist Isaac Moore to slow and frustrate settlement on the consecrated land. Internally, Ezra Thayer challenged the revealed understanding of consecration and demanded his consecrated money back or a title to the ground he paid for. The resulting row led to revelatory alterations to the anticipated Missouri mission and further clarifications of the law surrounding the consecration of funds and properties.

As with the Williams farm, the Copley catastrophe resulted from external resistance to the new sect combined with internal dissension. Copley’s faith faltered in the face of his failed mission to his former Shaker brethren, and a leader of that sect led the efforts to evict mem-

bers of the Church of Christ from the consecrated lands. These two cases also foreshadow the difficulties that were to come with future consecration and gathering. External resistance to the new religion's theological claims—and especially its propensity to gather together into a solid, unified body—would eventually spark devastating violence in Missouri on multiple occasions. And such antagonism would be once again fueled by internal dissensions, often over the management of consecrated properties. In any case, following these two early difficulties with consecrated properties, greater efforts were made to purchase and hold lands outright by the Church and its agents, though logistical difficulties, contentions, and jealousies surrounding consecrated properties would continue to be a problem for the early Church throughout the first decade following the receipt of the Law by the Church.

NOTES

1. Revelation, 15 June 1831 [D&C 56], in Michael Hubbard MacKay et al., eds., *Documents, Volume 1: July 1828–June 1831*, vol. 1 of the Documents series of *The Joseph Smith Papers*, ed. Dean C. Jessee et al. (Salt Lake City: Church Historian's Press, 2013), 339, hereafter cited as *JSP*, D1. I have examined the earliest manuscript sources of all these revelations myself, but to provide easy access to the readers, I will cite the published *Joseph Smith Papers* volumes throughout.
2. See for example, "Mormonism," *Painesville Telegraph*, 18 January 1831; "Martin Harris," *Painesville Telegraph*, 15 March 1831; and "Gold Bible Fever," *Painesville Telegraph*, 29 March 1831.
3. "Testimony of Brother E. Thayre," *True Latter Day Saints' Herald*, October 1862, 82–83.
4. Revelation, October 1830–B [D&C 33], in *JSP*, D1:207.
5. Revelation, 9 February 1831 [D&C 42:1–72], *JSP*, D1:252.
6. According to some sources, Copley may also not have held the title outright to his Thompson, Ohio, lands. See *JSP*, D1:314–15.
7. Geauga Co., OH, Deed Records, 1795–1921, volume 16, 22–23, 31 May 1832, microfilm 20, 236, and Cuyahoga Co., OH, Deeds and Mortgages, 1815–1866, volume N-13, 89–90, 7 April 1832, microfilm 1,994,223, LDS Family History Library. John McAuley also chronicled this land exchange, though he erred in the timing of Williams's conversion and the swap. He explained, "Isaac Moore

- was a farmer in comfortable circumstances, owning two hundred acres of land in Kirtland, much of which he had cleared off himself. In the winter of 1829–1830, he exchanged this farm with the Mormons for a farm in Warrensville, Ohio. This was the first farm bought by the Mormons of an unbeliever.” John McAuley Palmer, *The Bench and Bar of Illinois* (Chicago: Lewis Publishing, 1899), 896.
8. Amos Sutton Hayden, *Early History of the Disciples in the Western Reserve, Ohio; with Biographical Sketches of the Principal Agents in Their Religious Movement* (Cincinnati: Chase and Hall, 1875), 215, 472.
 9. J. J. Moss to James T. Cobb, 17 December 1878, in *Theodore Albert Schroeder Papers, 1845–1901*. State Historical Society of Wisconsin, copy at Church History Library, Salt Lake City, MS 9391.
 10. Revelation, 15 May 1831, in *JSP*, D1:312–14.
 11. Revelation, 15 May 1831, in *JSP*, D1:310–11.
 12. Minutes, circa 3–4 June 1831, in *JSP*, D1:326.
 13. Revelation, 6 June 1831 [D&C 52], in *JSP*, D1:330.
 14. *Historical Statistics of the United States, Colonial Times to 1970* (Washington, DC: US Department of Commerce, 1975), 163.
 15. Revelation, 15 June 1831 [D&C 56], in *JSP*, D1:341.
 16. Revelation, 15 June 1831 [D&C 56], in *JSP*, D1:341–42.
 17. Minute Book 2, 10 October 1831, 7–8.
 18. According to county tax records, Copley’s Thompson landholdings amounted to 759 acres. Geauga County, Ohio, Duplicate Tax Records, 1832–1833, Family History Library.
 19. Revelation, 2 January 1831 [D&C 38], in *JSP*, D1:233.
 20. Revelation, 4 February 1831 [D&C 41], in *JSP*, D1:243.
 21. Revelation, 4 February 1831 [D&C 41], in *JSP*, D1:243.
 22. *The Reflector*, 1 February 1831.
 23. Newel Knight, Autobiography and Journal, Church History Library, 28.
 24. Newel Knight, Autobiography and Journal, Church History Library, 29–30.
 25. Revelation, 20 May 1831 [D&C 51], in *JSP*, D1:316.
 26. Joseph Knight Sr., Reminiscence, Church History Library.
 27. Whitmer, History, 26, in Karen Lynn Davidson, Richard L. Jensen, and David J. Whittaker, eds., *Histories, Volume 2: Assigned Historical Writings, 1831–1847*, vol. 2 of the Histories series of *The Joseph Smith Papers*, ed. Dean C. Jessee, Ronald K. Esplin, and Richard Lyman Bushman (Salt Lake City: Church Historian’s Press, 2012), 37.
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