

Twelve Mormon Apostates

"A number of people (including the *New York Times*) wrote about a costly error at Brigham Young University last week that was originally reported by the *Utah Valley Daily Herald*. The error itself was subtle. First, it is important to realize that Brigham Young is a private university owned by the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints (i.e., the Mormon Church or LDS for short). The front of the the *Daily Universe* — the BYU university newspaper — featured a photograph of a group of men who form one of the most important governing bodies in the LDS church with the heading, 'Quorum of the Twelve Apostates.'"



Members of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles and other general authorities raise their hands in a sustaining vote Saturday morning during the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints' Annual General Conference held in the conference center in Salt Lake City.

The above photo, along with various reactions from Mormons, has been the source of both humor and chagrin. It has made the rounds of news sources and copies of the original page of the paper are being sold over the net for a hundred dollars or more.

The facts are that in the history of Mormonism there have been several apostate Apostles, as well as other apostate Mormon leaders. Early Apostles were appointed by Joseph Smith with great praise and then later condemned by him. Smith claimed, and Mormons believe, that God directed Smith in word and conduct. Here are Smith's own words about this—

"The way I know in whom to confide—God tells me in whom I may place confidence." *History of the Church*, Vol. 5, May, 1843, page 392. This is a Mormon publication.

However, in the same volume, page 412, Smith says this—

"Of the Twelve Apostles chosen in Kirtland, and ordained under the hands of Oliver Cowdery, David Whitmer and myself, there have been but two but what have lifted their heel against me—namely Brigham Young and Heber C. Kimball."

Keep in mind that Smith said in 1843 that only two of the original twelve had not apostatized. Just without considering any later appointees to the Apostles who also fell away Smith, admittedly, had 10 apostates out of the apostles at the very beginning even though God was supposed to tell him in whom to confide. Let's see some more specific evidence. First, the Apostolic Blessing on John Boynton and Luke Johnson—

“Apostolic blessing on John Boynton:-Thou hast prevailed and thou shalt prevail, and thou shalt declare the Gospel unto many nations. Thou shalt be made mighty before God; and although thou shalt be cast out from the face of men, yet thou shalt have power to prevail. Thou shalt lead the elect triumphantly to the places of refuge; thou shalt be like the brethren who have been blessed before thee. Thou shalt stand in that day of calamity when the wicked shall be consumed, and present unto the Father, spotless, the fruits of thy labor. Thou shalt overcome all the evils that are in the world; thou shalt have wisdom to put to silence all the wisdom of the wise; and thou shalt see the face of thy Redeemer in the flesh. These blessings are pronounced and sealed upon thee. Even so. Amen.” *History of the Church*, Vol. 2, page 191.

The Apostolic Blessing on Luke S. Johnson is similar to that of Boynton. These were two of the early Apostles. In the *Elders Journal*, August, 1838, page 56, Joseph Smith says—

“In all this grunting business, he was aided by Leonard Rich who, however was generally so drunk, that he had to support himself, by something, to keep from falling down; but then it was all for conscience sake. Also a pair of young blacklegs, one of them a Massachusetts shoemaker by the name of John F. Boynton, a man notorious for nothing, but ignorance; ill breeding and impudence. And the other by the name of Luke Johnson, whose notoriety consisted, if information be correct, in stealing a barrel of flour from his father, and other acts of a similar kind.”

The Apostolic Blessings on Boynton and Johnson were administered in February, 1835 and extreme disenchantment had set in by August of 1838. But, 1838 was the time of the denunciation by Smith. Just *when* in that time frame between 1835 and 1838 did they go bad? It obviously didn't take long. Also notice what Smith says about Johnson's stealing the flour - “if information is correct.” If God told Smith in whom to place confidence, why did God not warn him before hand about these two, and why did Smith have to rely on hearsay about what they did?

In 1840, Joseph Smith was welcoming Dr. John C. Bennett to Nauvoo. He was placing the greatest confidence in Bennett. In a letter to Bennett dated August 8, 1840, Smith says—

“It would afford me much pleasure to see you at this place, and from the desire you express in your letter to move to this place, I hope I shall soon have that satisfaction. I have no doubt you would be of great service to this community in practicing your profession, as well as those other abilities of which you are in possession.” *History of the Church*, Vol. 4, page 177.

Now, that was in August of 1840. By February, 1841, just a few months, Bennett was the Mayor of Nauvoo and elected Chancellor of the newly formed University of the City of Nauvoo. Also, Bennett was elected to be Major-General of the Nauvoo Legion directly under Smith. In the *History of the Church*, page 480, for December, 1841, the following statement of support for Bennett came from Smith—

“In the next canvass, we shall be influenced by no party consideration, and no Carthaginian coalescence or collusion with our people will be suffered to effect, or operate against General Bennett, or any other of our tried friends....”

But, this love-in was not to last. Just six months after praising Bennett, Smith has to expose him as a fraud. A little inspiration before hand would have been a great benefit. Notice—

"It is a matter of notoriety that the said Dr. John C. Bennett became favorable to the doctrine taught by the Elders of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, and located himself in the city of Nauvoo about the month of August, 1840, and soon after joined the Church. Soon after it was known that he had become a member of said Church, a communication was received at Nauvoo from a person of respectable character and residing in the vicinity where Bennett had lived. This letter cautioned us against him, setting forth that he was a very mean man, and had a wife and two or three children in McConnellsville, Morgan county, Ohio; but knowing that it is no uncommon thing for good men to be evil spoken against, the above letter was kept quiet, but held in reserve." *History of the Church*, Vol. 5, pages 35-36.

Smith then proceeds in the account to lay out the details and expose him. Bennett was indeed a con man with extremely an immoral character. But, this is not all of Smith's failures.

Section 114 of the Doctrine and Covenants is a revelation from God given by Joseph Smith to Apostle David W. Patton. A time was set for him to go on a mission. It was a prophecy from God! But, David W. Patton was killed before he could fulfill the prophecy! See also the *History of the Church*, vol. 3, page 171. This was similar to Lyman Sherman who was "called" to be an Apostle by "revelation" from God but died before he could even be told about it. See *BYU Studies*, Fall, 1978. How could God be trusted on anything? He supposedly could determine what someone would do but fail to know it could never happen nor use His power to make it happen.

And what are we to say about the three witnesses to the Book of Mormon that are printed in every issue of the BOM? David Whitmer and Oliver Cowdry left them and Martin Harris was so unstable that he drifted in and out. Or, what about the numerous divisions among the Mormons, each group claiming the other to be apostate?

He further said in the August, 1843, *History of the Church*, Vol. 5, page 554—

"I prophesy and bear record this morning that all the combined powers of earth and hell shall not and cannot ever overthrow or overcome this boy, for I have promise from the eternal God."

Yet, one of the most dramatic examples of his boasts of invincibility is the following. Here is what he said in an address just *one month* before his death at the hands of a mob that stormed the Carthage Jail—

"God is in the still small voice. In all these affidavits, indictments, it is all of the devil—all corruption. Come on! ye prosecutors, roll down your laws! for I will come out on the top at last. I have more to boast of than ever any man had. I am the only man that has ever been able to keep a whole church together since the days of Adam. A large majority of the whole have stood by me. Neither Paul, John, Peter, nor Jesus ever did it. I boast that no man ever did such a work as I. The followers of Jesus ran away from Him; but the Latter-day Saints never ran away from me yet. You know my daily walk and conversation. I am in the bosom of a virtuous and good people. How I do love to hear the wolves howl! When they can get rid of me, the devil will also go." *History of the Church*, May, 1844, pages 408-409.

These are just a very few instances of Smith's failures, and those who have followed him have placed their faith in a false prophet, regardless of whether or not they apostatize from Mormonism.

—Maurice Barnett