



CONTENTS

ON THE EDITORIAL PAGE

READER RESPONSES

TASTE

BOOKSTORE

CONTENTS

ON THE EDITORIAL PAGE

- Today's Featured Article
- Also on WSJ.com
- International Opinion

BEST OF THE WEB TODAY

E-MAIL SUBSCRIPTIONS

- Political Diary
- Free Updates

JOHN FUND ON THE TRAIL

PEGGY NOONAN

OPINIONJOURNAL FEDERATION

- Featured Article
- Poll Watch

THE JOURNAL EDITORIAL REPORT

PRESIDENTIAL LEADERSHIP

AMERICAN CONSERVATISM

ELECTORAL COLLEGE CALCULATOR

POETRY FOR THE WAR

A MARINE'S JOURNAL

READER RESPONSES

OUR FAVORITE SITES

SPECIAL FEATURES

ARCHIVES

TASTE

LEISURE & ARTS

COLUMNISTS

- Pete du Pont
- Daniel Henninger
- Brendan Miniter
- Kim Strassel

RSS FEED

ABOUT US

- Our Philosophy
- Who We Are
- Terms & Conditions
- Privacy Policy
- Contact Us
- How to Subscribe

Op-Ed Guidelines

Search



- OpinionJournal
- WSJ Online

Wall Street Journal Online Subscribers GO DIRECTLY TO

WSJ.com Network

- Wall Street Journal
- CareerJournal
- CollegeJournal
- RealEstateJournal
- StartupJournal
- WSJbooks
- CareerJournalAsia
- CareerJournalEurope
- MarketWatch

HOUSES OF WORSHIP

White Horse in the White House

Will a Mormon candidate fulfill Joseph Smith's prophecy?

BY CARRIE SHEFFIELD

Friday, November 3, 2006 12:01 a.m. EST

Though his family hails from Michigan and he is governor of Massachusetts, the lion's share of contributions to likely Republican presidential candidate Mitt Romney come from Utah. This is hardly surprising. More than 70% of Utah's residents are, like Mr. Romney, members of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints (LDS). As fellow Mormons, they feel a special kinship with him. Some even see in him the potential to fulfill a 160-year-old premonition by Mormon founder Joseph Smith, known as the "White Horse Prophecy."

In 1843, according to followers of Smith, he predicted that one day American citizens would be denied their most basic rights and the U.S. Constitution would "hang like a thread as fine as a silk fiber." "A terrible revolution will take place in the land of America, such as has never been seen before; for the land will be left without a Supreme Government, and every specie of wickedness will be practiced rampantly in the land," Smith reportedly said.

It would then be up to the Mormon people, symbolized by a white horse, to ride in and save the republic from collapsing. "I love the Constitution; it was made by the inspiration of God, and it will be preserved and saved by the efforts of the White Horse," Smith purportedly told his followers, borrowing the white horse image from the apostle John in the Book of Revelation.

Susan Easton Black, professor of church history and doctrine at Brigham Young University in Provo, Utah, said the White Horse tale was originally publicized by two devout Mormon men seeking to make money off of the prophet's narrative. According to Mrs. Black, the men sold the prophecy in a pamphlet to early Utah pioneers.

The prophecy, in various forms, was recounted in contemporaneous personal journals and spread by word-of-mouth among Latter-day Saints in early settlements in Illinois and then Utah. Later tellings of the story escalated its drama, painting pictures of a single Mormon man rushing in like a white knight in shining armor at a time of constitutional crisis.

Church prophets after Smith--who himself ran for president in 1844--toned down the prophecy somewhat, rejecting the white horse imagery but embracing the concept of the Constitution as a divinely inspired document that will face malicious attacks from unspecified enemies. And today students and teachers in LDS Sunday school classes across the country commonly discuss the idea that the Constitution is under attack.

"What do I think about it? Someday it will come true," says Jeff Hartley, executive director of the Utah Republican Party. "There have been several Republicans that I have known who thought that they were that individual," says Mr. Hartley, citing Todd Nielson, a GOP congressional candidate who failed in the 1996 state primary and Republican LaVar Christensen, currently vying for a seat for Utah's Second Congressional District. They have intimated to him that "the Constitution's hanging by a thread, and that they would be there to defend the Constitution," says Mr. Hartley. "We believe in personal revelation, so it's hard to dispute or question someone who feels like they were inspired to run for office."

The prophecy was discussed during Utah Sen. Orrin Hatch's 2000 bid for the Oval Office--especially after the senator used the phrase "hanging by a thread" during a radio interview. Mr. Hatch denied that his use of the phrase was a veiled reference to the prophecy.

Still, the prophecy continues to inspire Mormons to run for office, on both sides of the aisle. Steve Olsen, the Democratic candidate for Utah's First Congressional District, told me that Smith's vision inspired him to run. According to Mr. Olsen, a party official persuaded him to throw his hat into the ring by alluding to the prophecy. "You owe it to the Lord and the people to run," Mr. Olsen was told by Larry Daniel, chairman of the Iron County (Utah) Democrats. When Mr. Daniel noted that "our Constitution is more under attack by the Republicans than by outside forces and you are one of the elders of Israel who can help save it," Mr. Olsen says he was moved. (Mr. Olsen says that both he and Mr. Daniel are concerned about what they see as the expansion of executive power beyond constitutional bounds.)

But the bottom line, according to Mrs. Black, is that the prophecy as a whole is false. She doesn't talk about it in her classes: "We have more important things to discuss that are true." Indeed, LDS Church spokesman Mike Otterson is quick to point out the prophecy is not official canon. He says, "There may be some members of the church who think that in supporting a Mormon candidate and seeing the possibility of a Mormon president, there may be some sort of scriptural validation." But Mr. Otterson explains, "It begins to take on almost a zealous tone that I find a little worrisome."



February 26, 2007

11:07am EST

RESPOND TO THIS ARTICLE

READ RESPONSES

ARCHIVE

E-MAIL THIS TO A FRIEND

PRINT FRIENDLY FORMAT

VIEWPOINT

The American Spectator

The voice of the true conservative -- Ben Stein, the Washington Prowler and R. Emmett Tyrrell, Jr.

Keep Our Markets Free

Investing commentary from a conservative perspective.

Promote Your Company

Distribute a news release with PR Newswire and create visibility

Home Security

Protect your home and your privacy, with the company that lets you be in control.

It's Just Lunch

Wall Street Careers

CRM Software SALESFORCE.COM - Rated #1 CRM. Free 30-Day Trial and Demo.

\$100k+ job search

Advertisement



As Mr. Romney continues rising among 2008 hopefuls, questions about the prophecy will continue to surface: Would Mormons see a Romney White House as a White Horse? "I have no idea," says Utah Republicans' Mr. Hartley. "And frankly, I would worry about anybody who thought they were fulfilling prophecy because the way I understand it, you don't seek after those things. You don't recognize it until it's probably already happened."

Ms. Sheffield is a writer for the Capitol Leader in Washington, D.C.



[RESPOND TO THIS ARTICLE](#) [READ RESPONSES](#) [E-MAIL THIS TO A FRIEND](#) [PRINT FRIENDLY FORMAT](#)

[HOME](#) [TOP OF PAGE](#) [ARCHIVE](#)

[SUBSCRIBE TO THE WALL STREET JOURNAL ONLINE](#) OR [TAKE A TOUR](#)

[SIGN UP TODAY FOR FREE MARKETWATCH MEMBERSHIP](#)

Copyright © Dow Jones & Company, Inc. All Rights Reserved.
By using this site, you agree to the [Terms of Use](#) and [Privacy Policy](#).

[RSS](#) [XML](#)

ADVERTISERS LINKS | [WHAT'S THIS?](#)

Scottrade: \$7 Online Market Orders

\$7 stock trades. Free in-depth market research, news, quotes, charts.
www.scottrade.com

GFT Forex Trading-Free Demo Account

Learn to trade forex using Dealbook 360.
www.GFTforex.com

Forex Trading Investing

Try a free practice account and learn how currency trading works.
www.ac-markets.com