



---

Theses and Dissertations


---

1971

## Critical Analysis of Certain Apocryphal Reports in the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints As Related By Members of the Church

Don L. Penrod  
*Brigham Young University - Provo*

Follow this and additional works at: <https://scholarsarchive.byu.edu/etd>

 Part of the [Mormon Studies Commons](#), and the [Religious Thought, Theology and Philosophy of Religion Commons](#)

---

### BYU ScholarsArchive Citation

Penrod, Don L., "Critical Analysis of Certain Apocryphal Reports in the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints As Related By Members of the Church" (1971). *Theses and Dissertations*. 5028.  
<https://scholarsarchive.byu.edu/etd/5028>

This Thesis is brought to you for free and open access by BYU ScholarsArchive. It has been accepted for inclusion in Theses and Dissertations by an authorized administrator of BYU ScholarsArchive. For more information, please contact [scholarsarchive@byu.edu](mailto:scholarsarchive@byu.edu), [ellen\\_amatangelo@byu.edu](mailto:ellen_amatangelo@byu.edu).

200.2  
P306  
1991

CRITICAL ANALYSIS OF CERTAIN APOCRYPHAL REPORTS IN THE  
CHURCH OF JESUS CHRIST OF LATTER-DAY SAINTS AS  
RELATED BY MEMBERS OF THE CHURCH

L-2

A Thesis  
Presented to the  
Department of Church History and Doctrine  
Brigham Young University

In Partial Fulfillment  
of the Requirements for the Degree  
Master of Arts

by  
Don L. Penrod  
August 1971

## TABLE OF CONTENTS

Chapter	Page
1. INTRODUCTION . . . . .	1
Statement of the Problem . . . . .	1
Purpose of the Study . . . . .	2
Method of Procedure . . . . .	3
Delimitation of the Study . . . . .	4
Sources of Stories . . . . .	5
2. SPIRITUAL MANIFESTATIONS . . . . .	6
Appointed Leaders and Personal Revelations . . . . .	6
Circulation of Sensationalism . . . . .	15
Criteria and Guidelines . . . . .	19
3. VARIOUS STORIES AND ACCOUNTS . . . . .	26
Food Storage . . . . .	26
Patriarchal Blessings . . . . .	31
Various Stories . . . . .	33
White Indians . . . . .	36
4. ERROR IN PRINT . . . . .	39
Publications within the Scope of the Church . . . . .	39
My Conversion: The Sarver Story . . . . .	40
Hope of Zion . . . . .	42
5. HORSES AND PROPHECY . . . . .	46
Horseshoe Prophecy . . . . .	46
The White Horse Prophecy . . . . .	50
6. CONCLUSIONS . . . . .	63
BIBLIOGRAPHY . . . . .	67

8. There is no record by any of the General Authorities about it nor is there anything in the diaries of which we have copies.

This is just another evidence of the cleverly designed motives of individuals who seize upon the emotionalism of our present day to get publicity, and to further agitate the feelings of Church members on matters which must be left to the wisdom of the Lord and His guidance, which are under His divine control.<sup>14</sup>

Edward Lunt is now deceased. His wife informed Church officials that "before her husband died, he had expressed regret over writing of the incident. He reasoned that if President Taylor had wanted this recorded as prophecy he would have done it himself."<sup>15</sup>

#### The White Horse Prophecy

Possibly the most published of all reports is the one attributed to the Prophet Joseph Smith and supposedly uttered in Nauvoo on May 7, 1843.<sup>16</sup> Because of the symbolic use of horses of various colors, this "prophecy" is entitled "The White Horse Prophecy."

It has been suggested that,

. . . the White Horse represents the members of the Mormon Church, the Pale Horse, residents of the United States who are non-Mormons, the Red Horse symbolizes American Indians, the Black Horse the colored people of the United States.<sup>17</sup>

---

<sup>14</sup>Church News, April 4, 1970, p. 3.

<sup>15</sup>The Salt Lake Tribune, op. cit., p. 21.

<sup>16</sup>Joseph F. Smith, Conference Report, October, 1918, p. 58.

<sup>17</sup>Wing Anderson, Prophetic Years (Los Angeles: Kosmon Press, 1946), p. 33. Statements about colored horses also appear in the Bible. See Zachariah 6:2-3; Revelation 6:2-4; 19:11.

There is an abundance of versions and copies of the prophecy in books<sup>18</sup> and in separate documents covering a few pages.<sup>19</sup>

The date of the recording of the prophecy is undetermined. President Joseph F. Smith, in a general conference address, referred to the printing and circulating of what was supposed to be a great revelation of the Prophet Joseph as "a matter that was gotten up, I understand, some ten years after the death of the Prophet Joseph Smith, by two of our brethren. . . ." <sup>20</sup> President Smith did not indicate the source of his information nor the identity of the two brethren. He indicated that he understood the matter to have been gotten up some ten years after Joseph's death in 1844 but he did not say when it was put into written form or state that it was written at that time. The circulated material he alluded to apparently were copies of the prophecy that had been circulated by the date of that conference (1918). Something may possibly have been circulated orally which caused some people to later seek to get

---

<sup>18</sup>Anderson, Prophetic Years; Robert W. Smith, The Last Days (Salt Lake City: Woodruff Printing and Litho, 1968), pp. 33-40; Duane S. Crowther, Prophecy--Key to the Future (Salt Lake City: Bookcraft, 1962), pp. 301-322, hereafter cited as Prophecy; and Norman C. Pierce, The 3½ Years (n.p., registered October, 1963), pp. 153-159.

<sup>19</sup>There are twenty different copies in the Church Historian's Office. These copies and those in print (footnote 18 above) are the ones used and referred to in this study.

<sup>20</sup>Smith, Conference Report, October, 1918, p. 58. Italics added.

the material written down but evidence is lacking to show that the prophecy was in written form that early.

On the contrary, many of the copies of the prophecy have an introductory paragraph that says:

The following is a copied form from the Journal of Elder John J. Roberts of Paradise, Utah. Elder Roberts makes this explanation as a preface: 'On the next page will be found a prophecy by the Prophet Joseph Smith, related to Edwin Rushton and Theodore Turley. This prophecy has never been given to the public. I received it from Robert Pace [Pearce] on Friday, Feb. 28, 1902.'<sup>21</sup>

John J. Roberts was born in Paradise, Utah, on June 22, 1877.<sup>22</sup> He returned home from a mission to Samoa on February 4, 1902,<sup>23</sup> and received a copy of the recorded prophecy from Robert Pearce which he entered into his journal. Robert's statement, "This prophecy has never been given to the public," seems to indicate that it had been written down fairly recent to the time that he received it. This is compatible to the explanation given by Norman Pierce of the recording of the prophecy. Pierce states:

Several years before the death of Edwin Rushton in Salt Lake City, in 1904, he was subjected to rigid cross examination and requested to make many repetitions by

---

<sup>21</sup>Extracts from Pioneer G. O.'s Journal (n.p., n.d.). Pamphlets in Church Historian's Office, hereafter cited as Extracts. Italics added. The G. O. stands for George Osborne. The quote as given is from Extracts and appears on eight copies of the prophecy in the Historian's Office in a little different wording. The name Pace is an error and should read Pearce. There was a Robert Pearce who went on a mission from Paradise, Utah, to the Southern States in 1883 when thirty-one years old. See Missionary Card Index in Church Historian's Office.

<sup>22</sup>Missionary Record, Book C, 1898.

<sup>23</sup>Missionary Card Index in Church Historian's Office.

James H. Anderson and Arnold G. Giaque; all of which proved the complete absence of any contradictions in his story. Edwin Rushton was then requested to have the White Horse Vision recorded and notarized before these gentlemen. This was done with James H. Anderson acting as recorder and Arnold G. Giaque as notary.<sup>24</sup>

Known copies in Rushton's handwriting indicate he was in his last years of life when he wrote them,<sup>25</sup> some forty or fifty years after the vision was supposed to have occurred.<sup>26</sup>

There is no recognition given to Rushton or Theodore Turley in Church annals for their part in recording the prophecy.<sup>27</sup> A number of column inches were given to report the death of Edwin Rushton in the Deseret Evening News which included a brief review of his life and accomplishments, but there was no mention of or reference to any involvement in recording the prophecy.<sup>28</sup> Apparently no dependable or authoritative source of that time was willing to lend an air

---

<sup>24</sup>Pierce, pp. 153-154.

<sup>25</sup>Personal interview with Thomas G. Truitt of the Church Historian's Office.

<sup>26</sup>Rushton was born June 1, 1824, and would have been almost nineteen years old when the vision was supposedly given. Theodore Turley was born April 10, 1800, and would have been forty-three years old at the time.

<sup>27</sup>Andrew Jenson, Biographical Encyclopedia (Salt Lake City: Deseret News Press, 1936). No mention is made of Rushton or Turley although both have sons written about (Vol. IV, pp. 311, 501). Neither the DHC or B. H. Roberts, A Comprehensive History of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints (Salt Lake City: Deseret News Press, 1930), hereafter cited as CHC, make any mention of the prophecy or the relationship of the two men to any such activity.

<sup>28</sup>Deseret News, December 29, 1904, p. 2.

of authenticity to the prophecy by giving recognition to its author and recorder, Edwin Rushton.

There seems to be very little evidence available to link Turley with the prophecy. Rushton claims that Turley was present when the prophecy was supposedly given<sup>29</sup> but there is sparse evidence that would corroborate this claim or establish Turley as a co-recorder. Crowther attempts to validate the prophecy by suggesting that Turley would have exposed it as false were it not a true prophecy.<sup>30</sup> However, the prophecy appears to have been written after his death at Beaver, Utah, in 1872, which is what Pierce indicates.<sup>31</sup> Crowther says Rushton recorded the prophecy and delivered a copy into the hands of Patriarch John Smith, Hyrum's son.<sup>32</sup> This could all have been done after Turley's death. Smith lived in Salt Lake City as did Rushton and died seven years after Rushton, in 1911.<sup>33</sup> If Rushton did indeed record the prophecy after Turley's death, as it so appears, then the attempt to link Turley's good name with the prophecy<sup>34</sup> is vain.

The White Horse Prophecy was purportedly given on May 7, 1843, and repeated in a meeting about two weeks

---

<sup>29</sup>Crowther, Prophecy, p. 304.   <sup>30</sup>Ibid., p. 302.

<sup>31</sup>Pierce, The 3½ Years, pp. 153-154.

<sup>32</sup>Crowther, Prophecy, p. 301.

<sup>33</sup>Joseph Fielding Smith, Essentials in Church History (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book Company, 1963), p. 703.

<sup>34</sup>Crowther, Prophecy, pp. 301-302.



later.<sup>35</sup> There is no record of either the prophecy having been given or its later use to be found in Church annals or the newspapers and journals of that time. Joseph Smith has nothing recorded in his diary about the prophecy. Other respected journals of that era are equally silent on the matter.

The opening paragraph of the prophecy reads:

On or about the sixth day of May, 1843, a grand review of the Nauvoo Legion was held in Nauvoo. The Prophet Joseph complimented them for their good discipline and evolutions performed. The weather being hot, he called for a glass of water. With the glass of water in his hand he said, 'I drink to you a toast to the overthrow of the mobocrats.'<sup>36</sup>

Joseph's diary records his review of the Nauvoo Legion on the sixth day of May and some of the remarks made:

In the course of my remarks on the prairie, I told the Legion that when we have petitioned those in power for assistance, they have always told us they had no power to help us. Damn such traitors! When they give me the power to protect the innocent, I will never say I can do nothing for their good: I will exercise that power, so help me God. At the close of the address, the Legion marched to the city and disbanded in Main Street about two p.m., the day being windy and very cold.<sup>37</sup>

The weather conditions as recorded by the Prophet are diametrically opposite to the claims of the prophecy and present a great weakness in its claims of validity. It has been suggested that the Prophet's remarks, as given above, might explain or give support to the idea of the toast

---

<sup>35</sup>The White Horse Prophecy (Salt Lake City: R. W. LeBaron, 1952), p. 2. Pamphlet located in BYU Library, Special Collections. Many copies of the prophecy, though not all, refer to the meeting of two weeks later.

<sup>36</sup>Crowther, Prophecy, p. 303. Italics added.

<sup>37</sup>DHC, V, 384. Italics added.

mentioned in the prophecy.<sup>38</sup> However, if the Prophet ever gave the toast accredited to him in the prophecy it probably would have been recorded by someone in attendance, if not the Prophet himself, by reason of its uniqueness. The words of the toast to the mobocrats were:

Here's wishing they were in the middle of the sea, in a stone canoe with iron paddles, and a shark swallow the canoe, and the Devil swallow the shark, and the Devil locked up in the northwest corner of Hell, the key lost, and a blind man looking for it.<sup>39</sup>

It would seem reasonable that if such a colorfully stated toast had been given in the presence of a great number of people, of whom some were wont to keep daily journals or diaries, that it would have attracted the pen of one if not a few. But such a statement has not been found.

The prophecy next claims:

The next morning a man who had heard the Prophet give the toast returned to visit the mansion of the Prophet, and so abused him with bad language, that the man was ordered out by the Prophet. It was while the two were out that my attention was attracted to them and hearing the man speaking in a loud tone of voice, I went toward them; the man finally leaving.<sup>40</sup>

---

<sup>38</sup>Crowther, Prophecy, p. 303. Crowther states, "While his record does not indicate that he was giving a toast the Prophet did record comments which could have been given in such a manner and which were of a similar nature." However, the above comparison of the toast and the journal entry prove the two to be extremely dissimilar.

<sup>39</sup>Pierce, The 3½ Years, p. 154. This part of the prophecy was omitted or overlooked in Crowther's detailed analysis but is found in many of the copies in the Church Historian's Office and elsewhere, including the one published by Pierce which he obtained from the son-in-law of Edwin Rushton.

<sup>40</sup>Crowther, Prophecy, p. 304. Italics added. Two other versions state that the Prophet chased the man down the street.

Joseph's diary records no such visit that day. The entry for Sunday, May 7, reads:

In the forenoon I was visited by several gentlemen, concerning the plates that were dug out near Kinderhook. The council of the First Presidency met. Elder Brigham Young preached at La Harpe.<sup>41</sup>

The "gentlemen" mentioned are not identified by the Prophet but seem to have been of a different character than the abusive man spoken of in the prophecy and had come for a different purpose. The Prophet had previous dealings with the men owning the Kinderhook plates and had translated a portion of them, so the possibility of it being the same men seems feasible.<sup>42</sup> He wrote about the plates and included considerable information in his diary from the Times and Seasons and the Quincy Whig just six days prior to the visit of the gentlemen.<sup>43</sup> It seems highly unlikely that one of the "gentlemen" referred to could be made out to be the coarse individual related to the prophecy. Also, the prophecy states that only one man left; therefore, the others of the several gentlemen must have remained. Yet, in all of the versions reviewed only Rushton, Turley, and the Prophet were listed as being present.

Another consideration deals with the vile language of the visitor and the Prophet ordering the man out of the house. Again, there is nothing in Joseph's record of that date to substantiate such a statement, which makes it all

---

<sup>41</sup>DHC, V, 384. Italics added.

<sup>42</sup>Ibid., p. 372.

<sup>43</sup>Ibid., pp. 372-378.

appear to be a fabrication. Joseph commonly recorded such abuse in his diary.<sup>44</sup> On one occasion he wrote of some differences with a tax collector named Bagby that ended in a physical encounter. Joseph charged him with continually abusing the citizens in Nauvoo. "Bagby called me a liar," Joseph noted, "and picked up a stone to throw at me, which so enraged me that I followed him a few steps, and struck him two or three times."<sup>45</sup>

The one instance chronicled in Joseph's diary that is possibly most directly related to the White Horse Prophecy involves an altercation with a man named Butterfield. It fits the description of the previously mentioned event in the prophecy where Joseph was so verbally abused by a visitor in his home that he ordered the man out. Joseph reports, "Josiah Butterfield came to my house and insulted me so outrageously that I kicked him out of the house, across the yard, and into the street."<sup>46</sup> This entry in Joseph's diary is dated Tuesday, March 28, 1843, which was just six weeks earlier than the date of the prophecy. The close similarity between Joseph's journal entry and the statement in the prophecy raises the question of them possibly being the very same event. But there is no evidence as to what the Butterfield incident was about. If

---

<sup>44</sup>DHC, I, 91; II, 323, 334-335; V, 14, 316, 524; VI, 344-345.

<sup>45</sup>DHC, V, 524.

<sup>46</sup>DHC, V, 316.

the "prophecy" were nothing more than an attempt to compile some events and statements as remembered by Rushton after a period of some forty or fifty years, the six week gap might have been bridged in Rushton's memory. This might also be true concerning the Prophet's declaration about going to the Rocky Mountains. Rushton could have been present when Joseph uttered a prophetic statement regarding the saints' removal to the mountains or he might possibly have heard it from someone who heard the Prophet's remarks. Nine months previous to the dates given for the White Horse Prophecy, also a Saturday and a Sunday; a sixth and a seventh day of the month (the incidents of the prophecy are recorded as happening on Saturday, May 6, and Sunday, May 7), Joseph was speaking with a few men under a bowery and enjoying a drink of cold water. Part of the journal entry for that day, Saturday, August 6, 1842, reads:

I prophesied that the Saints would continue to suffer much affliction and would be driven to the Rocky Mountains, many would apostatize, others would be put to death by our persecutors or lose their lives in consequence of exposure or disease, and some of you will live to go and assist in making settlements and build cities and see the Saints become a mighty people in the midst of the Rocky Mountains.<sup>47</sup>

In writing of this same occurrence, Edward Tullidge observed that "Joseph, as he was tasting the cold water, warned the brethren not to be too free with it. With the tumbler still in his hand he prophesied that the Saints would yet go to the Rocky Mountains. . . ."48

---

<sup>47</sup>DHC, V, 85.

<sup>48</sup>Ibid., p. 86.

Are these consistent close similarities between the Prophet's record and items listed in the supposed prophecy just circumstantial or are they evidences of the "prophecy" being nothing more than a compilation, of questionable accuracy, of various utterances made by the Prophet at divers times?

Attempts were made by some authors to establish a foundation of proof of validity for the prophecy by trying to show that General Authorities quoted from it during addresses to the saints.<sup>49</sup> There are ample examples of statements made by General Authorities that are of a similar nature to sayings that were written into the prophecy by its author,<sup>50</sup> but as to the Prophet Joseph giving all together the things listed in the prophecy, President Joseph F. Smith declared at a general conference, ". . . it was never spoken by the prophet in the manner in which they [those responsible for writing and circulating it] have put it forth."<sup>51</sup>

Statements have been given at sundry times by General Authorities reflecting the attitude of the Church in regard to the prophecy. Bruce R. McConkie wrote:

From time to time, accounts of various supposed visions, revelations, and prophecies are spread forth by and among the Latter-day Saints, who should know better than to believe or spread such false information.

---

<sup>49</sup>Crowther, Prophecy, pp. 302-303; LeBaron, White Horse Prophecy, p. 1; Pierce, The 3½ Years, pp. 159-160.

<sup>50</sup>Crowther, Prophecy, pp. 303-321.

<sup>51</sup>Smith, Conference Report, October, 1918, p. 58.

One of these false and deceptive documents that has cropped up again and again for over a century is the so-called White Horse Prophecy.<sup>52</sup>

On another occasion McConkie spoke of the prophecy as ". . . that spurious bit of prophetic imagery that refuses to die out among sensation seekers which is called, 'The White Horse Prophecy.'"<sup>53</sup>

Joseph Fielding Smith made some remarks about the prophecy and gave some guidance in determining true revelation during the general conference of October, 1918. He said:

. . . I have discovered that people have copies of a purported vision by the Prophet Joseph Smith given in Nauvoo, and some people are circulating this supposed vision, or revelation, or conversation which the prophet is reported to have held with a number of individuals in the city of Nauvoo. I want to say to you, my brethren and sisters, that if you understand the Church articles and covenants, if you will read the scriptures and become familiar with those things which are recorded in the revelations from the Lord, it will not be necessary for you to ask any questions in regard to the authenticity or otherwise of any purported revelation, vision, or manifestation that proceeds out of darkness, concocted in some corner, surreptitiously presented, and not coming through the proper channels of the Church.<sup>54</sup>

President Joseph F. Smith followed his son to the stand in that conference and declared the official position of the Church on the White Horse Prophecy in these clear terms:

---

<sup>52</sup>McConkie, Mormon Doctrine, p. 835.

<sup>53</sup>Bruce R. McConkie, "How to Start a Cult," p. 4. Unpublished manuscript located in BYU library, Special Collections.

<sup>54</sup>Joseph Fielding Smith, Conference Report, October, 1918, p. 55.

The ridiculous story about the 'red horse,' and 'the black horse,' and 'the white horse,' and a lot of trash that has been circulated about and printed and sent around as a great revelation given by the Prophet Joseph Smith, is a matter that was gotten up, I understand, some ten years after the death of the Prophet Joseph Smith, by two of our brethren who put together some broken sentences from the Prophet that they may have heard him utter from time to time and formulated this so called revelation out of it and it was never spoken by the prophet in the manner in which they have put it forth. It is simply false; that is all there is to it.<sup>55</sup>

As in all things, the final decision rests in the mind of the individual. The alternatives for a Latter-day Saint seem, however, not to lie in weighing out the wisdom of the world in an attempt to decide if the prophecy is true or false, but in whether or not to follow the sustained authorities of his Church.

---

<sup>55</sup>Joseph F. Smith, Conference Report, October, 1918, pp. 57-58. Italics added.