

The worldview laid out in the writings of Elizabeth Smart's alleged abductor is entirely derivative. Every one of his views that is likely to strike mainstream Latter-day Saints as bizarre has a precedent in beliefs that thrive on the margins of the LDS community itself.

THE MAKING OF IMMANUEL

BRIAN DAVID MITCHELL AND THE MORMON FRINGE

By John-Charles Duffy

ON THE DAY FOLLOWING BRIAN DAVID MITCHELL'S arrest on suspicion of kidnapping Elizabeth Smart, LDS Public Affairs emphatically denied that Mitchell was Mormon: "Neither Brian David Mitchell nor his wife, Wanda Eileen Mitchell, are members of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints or are affiliated with it in any way." The official statement conceded that Mitchell and his wife "are former Church members" but hastened to add that they had been "excommunicated for activity promoting bizarre teachings and lifestyle far afield from the principles and doctrines of the Church."¹

Church officials admitted to the *New York Times* that media coverage surrounding Mitchell's arrest had put them "on the defensive."² News stories around the globe linked Mitchell to LDS teachings about polygamy and personal revelation. The media commonly suggested that Mormonism's emphasis on obedience to male authority, or affinities between Mitchell's religious ideas and mainstream LDS beliefs, might explain why Smart had been so susceptible to Mitchell's control. There was the suggestion—at times the outright assertion—that this horrible incident was a product of Mormonism. "Like it or not," one online commentator wrote, "the truth of the matter is that within the Mormon doctrines lie evil seeds waiting to germinate in . . . deluded specimens like Brian David Mitchell."³

In the wake of Mitchell's arrest, Latter-day Saints responded in various ways to what they perceived as negative publicity for their religion.⁴ LDS Public Affairs continued to chastise journalists who called Mitchell or other polygamists



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"Mormon" and dismissed as "nonsense" the suggestion that Mormon teachings were at the core of the Smart story.⁵ Some Saints minimized the connection between their faith and Mitchell's by insisting that Mitchell had "twisted" or "misconstrued" LDS teachings, taken them "out of context," or gone "off on a tangent."⁶ Mitchell has been dismissed as delusional, deranged, mentally ill, perhaps even a conscious fraud.⁷

Mitchell may be mentally ill; he may have acted with conscious intent to deceive. But Mitchell is also devoutly, all-too-devoutly, religious; and the religious worldview to which he subscribes is rooted in Mormonism. Mitchell believes he is the divinely appointed prophetic successor to Joseph Smith. Mitchell's revelations, which have frequently been described as "rambling," actually reflect a coherent worldview synthesized from statements by nineteenth-century LDS leaders, teachings of former Mormon apostle and Church president Ezra Taft Benson, and beliefs endemic to entire subcultures within the LDS community. Mitchell's beliefs may be "far afield" of what the majority of today's Saints profess, but there are possibly thousands of members and former members of the Church who would find that in many ways, Mitchell's beliefs coincide with their own.

"I NAME THEE IMMANUEL"

Who is Brian David Mitchell? What does he believe?

MITCHELL WAS BORN into a family largely alienated from the Church but with roots going back to the Mormon pioneer era.⁸ Although he attended church as a child, Mitchell professed to be an atheist until he was nearly thirty, when an LSD-induced vision convinced him that God wanted him to return to the Church. Twice-divorced, Mitchell has been accused of physical and sexual abuse, but he had served as a high councilor and a temple worker and was unusually strict in applying Church standards—the kind of Mormon who eats only whole wheat bread and walks out of movies containing profanity. Media interviews with relatives

and friends paint contrasting pictures of Mitchell, but together, they suggest a disturbed man struggling to find stability through strict obedience to the gospel.⁹

Beginning in the late 1980s or early '90s, Mitchell and his third wife, Wanda Barzee, observed rigorous home devotions, praying for hours at a stretch. Angelic visitations and revelations followed. They insisted that relatives call them by new names: David (pronounced as in Hebrew, DAH-vid) and Eladah. In 1995, Mitchell and Barzee sold their possessions and spent the next two years hitchhiking around the country, returning to Salt Lake in 1997 with intentions to preach to the homeless. In his white robes and unkempt beard, Mitchell—now calling himself Immanuel—became a familiar sight in downtown Salt Lake, where he and Barzee panhandled. On 6 April 2002, Barzee finished transcribing a twenty-seven-page collection of Mitchell's revelations titled *The Book of Immanuel David Isaiah*, which the couple distributed to relatives. Local Church leaders obtained a copy as well, leading to the couple's excommunication in absentia at the beginning of June 2003—the same week that Elizabeth Smart disappeared.¹⁰

The Book of Immanuel is a collection of eight documents, numbered one through seven, with an additional section bearing the odd title "Plus One." All but one of the documents are oracular revelations in the voice of the Lord, akin to those found in the Doctrine and Covenants. Section One of *The Book of Immanuel* begins:

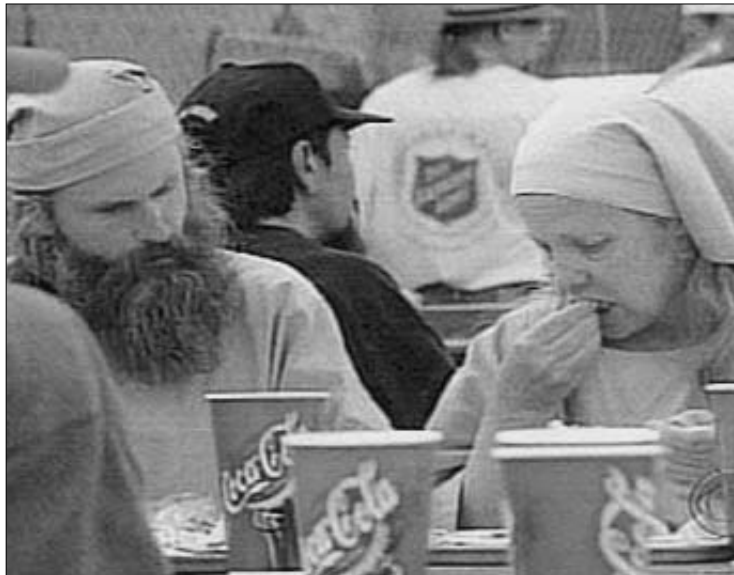
Hearken! Oh ye inhabitants of the earth. Listen together and open your ears, for it is I, the Lord God of all the earth, the creator of all things that speaketh unto you. Yea, even Jesus Christ speaking by the voice of my servant whom I have called and chosen to be a light and a covenant to the world in these last days. I have called him and given him a name to be had in remembrance before me, even the name Immanuel David Isaiah. . . .¹¹

In Mitchell's revelations, the Lord chastises the Saints for rejecting the Book of Mormon and the words of the prophets, especially the words of Ezra Taft Benson; for loving money and

seeking the praise of the world; for ignoring the poor and needy; for failing to testify against secret combinations; for turning to doctors to cure illness instead of relying on faith, herbs, and fruits. The revelation titled "Plus One" speaks to Barzee rather than Mitchell, commanding her to welcome into her home seven times seven plural wives. Though Barzee had a hysterectomy after divorcing her first husband,¹² the revelation promises her that if she is obedient, "thine own womb shall be opened, and thou shalt bring forth a son to sit upon the throne of his father David."¹³ Mitchell is told that he will be

a king and a lawgiver but also that he will suffer in similitude of Christ. There are quotations from Isaiah (but not from the King James Version) prophesying that Mitchell will be "marred beyond human likeness" and "numbered with criminals."¹⁴

Besides the oracular revelations, *The Book of Immanuel* includes a "Statement of Intent and Purpose," dated 1997, for an organization called The Seven Diamonds Plus One—Testaments of Jesus Christ—Study and Fellowship Society. This society is dedicated to examining "the covenants between God and man as contained in the Testaments of Jesus Christ that are herein set forth; and to . . . consider how we . . . may fulfill the solemn and binding agreements that we have entered into with our God."¹⁵ There then follows a list of seven



Brian David Mitchell and Wanda Barzee

Mitchell and Barzee claim to have received angelic visitations and revelations.

documents, plus one, which Mitchell and Barzee regard as testaments of Christ:

1. The Holy Bible—King James Version
2. The Book of Mormon—translated by Joseph Smith
3. The inspired words of prophets of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints
4. *The Golden Seven Plus One* by Dr. C. Samuel West
5. *Embraced by the Light* by Betty J. Eadie
6. *The Literary Message of Isaiah* by Avraham Gileadi
7. *The Final Quest* by Rick Joyner

Plus One
1. Inspired sacred music and song and the testimonies of all the humble followers of Jesus Christ by the power of the Holy Ghost¹⁶

LIKE SON, LIKE FATHER

BRIAN DAVID MITCHELL'S father, Shirl, has prophetic aspirations of his own. As a child, Shirl heard a voice tell him, "You are Christ." He eventually came to understand this as a sign that he is the "mortal messenger of Deity," called to reveal the truth about human evolutionary potential. Beginning in his early twenties, Shirl spent half a century developing what would eventually be a 900-page manuscript titled *Spokesman for the Infant God or Goddess* (completed in 1997, the same year that Brian launched his own prophetic ministry).



Shirl teaches that human beings collectively constitute the body of an infant deity, just as cells constitute our own bodies. The infant deity—the offspring of the sun, who is a goddess, and a male companion star—has been gestating over the last several million years of human evolution and is now ready to be born. This birth will occasion a radical transformation in society. In the new age following the birth of the infant deity, people will follow an all-natural vegetarian diet. Children will engage in erotic play without repression; teenagers will freely copulate for the purpose of procreation; and adults, having sexually satiated themselves during childhood and adolescence, will live in celibate ecstasy. Marriage, an inherently dysfunctional institution, will be done away.

Idiosyncratic though they are, Shirl's prophetic teachings have certain affinities to Mormon tradition—themes of apostasy, revelation, millennium, and divine nature—which Shirl himself attributes to his Mormon background. Shirl writes at some length about Joseph Smith, the Book of Mormon, the Word of Wisdom, and Mormon polygamy.

Like his son, Shirl comes across as disturbed—particularly, in Shirl's case, as regards the body and sexuality. He abhors elimination, by which he means menstrual blood and bowel movements; in the new age, these will be minimized if not altogether cease. Shirl writes of the "addictive voyeurism" that had him fondling young girls as a child and peeping into women's windows as an adult. He complains that every woman is a manipulative nymphomaniac whom no husband could possibly satisfy; he fears that his penis could be "strangled" during sex; he is fascinated by a recurring dream in which a shaft of light penetrates his anal chakra. Accused by his former wife of rape, Shirl defends himself by insisting that when rape occurs in marriage, it's because wives withhold sex from their husbands and that there can be no "illegal rape" in marriage anyway. Abuse of wives by husbands is inevitable, Shirl maintains, and will end only when the institution of marriage is abolished. Shirl Mitchell, like Brian, appears to struggle with personal demons—and that struggle manifests itself in his prophetic teachings.

Where is all this coming from? Why does Mitchell accuse Latter-day Saints of rejecting the Book of Mormon and the latter-day prophets? Whence his opposition to doctors? Why does he apply to himself Isaiah's "suffering servant" prophecies, which, like other Christians, Latter-day Saints traditionally understand as referring to Jesus? Avraham Gileadi and Betty Eadie will likely be familiar names to Latter-day Saints; but who are C. Samuel West and Rick Joyner?

Little wonder that mainstream Saints have concluded that Mitchell's beliefs are "bizarre," even delusional. Yet the worldview laid out in *The Book of Immanuel* is not the product of lunatic imaginings on Mitchell's part. Mitchell's worldview is entirely derivative. Everything about *The Book of Immanuel* that is likely to strike mainstream Saints as bizarre has a precedent in beliefs that thrive on the margins of the LDS community itself.

FOLK ON THE FRINGE

Mitchell emerged from subcultures on the margins of Mormonism

DURING THE TWENTIETH century, Mormonism transformed itself from a separatist movement with radical beliefs and practices into a more mainstream religion—still distinctive but accommodationist, more in line with conservative American values and bearing greater resemblance to what the public would recognize as a Christian church.¹⁷ "Not weird," as President Gordon B. Hinckley has famously said.¹⁸

Accommodation has required that certain nineteenth-century Mormon traits or tendencies be deemphasized, attenuated, or altogether suppressed. Older ways of thinking have not disappeared, however, especially in the Mormon corridor (Utah, Idaho, Arizona), where they are passed from generation to generation in families and communities whose roots go back to nineteenth-century Mormonism. Accommodation has shifted people who subscribe to these older ways of thinking to the margins of the LDS community. But such people are likely to have a strong awareness of their connection to past Mormon tradition and therefore a strong sense of their own legitimacy. People at the margins may eventually become so out of step with the mainstream that they leave the Church altogether, either by choice or as a result of Church discipline. Many others, however, will spend their entire lives in the Church. Such individuals will strike accommodationist Saints as unusually conservative, maybe even "weird"; but if they live in certain parts of Utah, they may not stand out at all.

The key to understanding Mitchell's Mormon connection is to get a sense of the accommodation-resistant subcultures on the margins of Mormonism. Mitchell emerges from this Mormon fringe. His "bizarre" beliefs are descended from attitudes once mainstream in Mormonism but later pushed to the margins. Mitchell demonstrates four tendencies current among accommodation-resistant Latter-day Saints: (1) nostalgia for everyday access to the supernatural, (2) allegiance to alternative teachings about health, (3) ultraconservative politics, and (4) a strong impulse to separate from the world.

I. NOSTALGIA FOR THE SUPERNATURAL

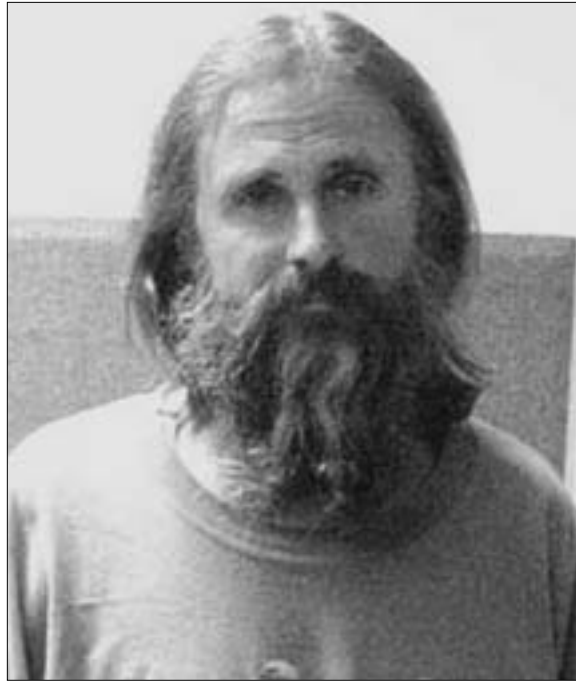
NINETEENTH-CENTURY MORMONS inhabited a conceptual world where supernatural phenomena were unsurprising. They expected, and witnessed, miraculous healings, outpourings of spiritual gifts such as speaking in tongues or prophesying, and visitations by angelic or demonic beings. Such events were held up as a sign that the LDS movement was indeed the Lord's work; the absence of miracles in other faith communities was regarded as a sign of apostasy (Moroni 10:24–25).

Certainly accounts of the miraculous and the supernatural survive into contemporary Mormonism, but they are less prominent—less expected—than they once were. The LDS hierarchy has undergone a routinization of charisma such that apostles no longer profess to have had personal visitations by Jesus Christ, and prophets no longer produce oracular revelations in the style “Thus saith the Lord.”¹⁹ Members are cautioned not to expect dramatic spiritual manifestations, and those who do have them are advised that these experiences are sacred and therefore should not be spoken of.²⁰ As a result, LDS discourse is now dominated by what might be called a “routinized spirituality” in which encounters with the spiritual realm take the form of peaceful feelings or general impressions rather than audible voices or visitations from the spirit world. At the same time, among the Saints, there remains an undercurrent of nostalgia for the days when the supernatural seemed closer at hand.²¹

The popularity of Betty Eadie's *Embraced by the Light*²² demonstrates the fascination that many Saints continue to have for accounts of the supernatural, despite their marginalization in official discourse. Eadie's account of her visit to the spirit world, published in 1992 by independent LDS press Aspen Books, sold out its first print run within days, thanks largely to enthusiastic LDS readers (some of whom had already heard Eadie share her experience in firesides). In 1993, the *Salt Lake Tribune* reported that “large numbers” of Latter-day Saints were buying the book and discussing it in “study groups.”²³ When

Eadie came to Salt Lake for a speaking engagement, thousands turned out to hear her. Eadie was also criticized by Latter-day Saints, who accused her of teaching false doctrine, while the Church remained officially silent about the book.²⁴ But the success of *Embraced by the Light* spawned a series of additional books on near-death experiences published by small independent LDS presses.²⁵ Clearly, Eadie had struck a nerve, at least within a segment of the LDS community.

Mitchell shares the nostalgia for the supernatural that drew so many other Saints to Eadie's book at a time when experiences like hers had virtually dropped out of official discourse. Mitchell ranked Eadie's account of her near-death experience among his “seven diamonds plus one,” regarding it as a true testament of Christ akin to the dramatic spiritual manifestations he himself had experienced following hours of prayer.²⁶ Following a long-established precedent among LDS dissidents,²⁷ Mitchell pushes nostalgia for the supernatural to the next level, holding up the LDS mainstream's routinized spirituality as a sign of apostasy. In *The Book of Immanuel*, the Lord laments that visions, prophecy, and miracles are no longer common among the Saints. How can the Saints fulfill their mission in the unprecedented wickedness of the last days, the Lord asks, unless they walk in even greater power than Joseph Smith, Brigham Young, or the mortal Christ himself? Where are the visitations and miracles that marked the work of the Lord's servants in ages past?²⁸ Ironically, this is the same question that early Mormonism had posed to sectarian Christianity.



Brian David Mitchell

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2. ALTERNATIVE TEACHINGS ABOUT HEALTH

MORMONISM HAS A history of antipathy to conventional medicine. Throughout the nineteenth century, Joseph Smith, Brigham Young, and other Church leaders promoted faith, herbs, and mild food as the appropriate response to disease; consulting a doctor was regarded as a sign of weak faith. Around the turn of the century, the Church attenuated and fi-

nally reversed its opposition to conventional medicine.²⁹ Still, the older anti-medical tradition endured. As a result, by the 1970s and '80s, the Saints had a reputation for being susceptible to medical and nutritional quackery.³⁰ Alarmed medical professionals have pointed to a thriving LDS subculture that regards faith in alternative medicine as synonymous with faith in the restored gospel.³¹

One representative of this subculture is LDS naturopath C. Samuel West, author of a book titled *The Golden Seven Plus One*.³² West regards his book as a product of divine inspiration: he dictated it to a scribe in a process recalling the coming forth of the Book of Mormon.³³ West's book holds that the root cause of all pain, disease, and death is proteins trapped in the bloodstream, which can be removed through various techniques, including adopting a vegetarian diet, bouncing on a trampoline, and learning to redirect the body's bio-electric field. West's book contains pages of testimonials from people who have achieved quasi-miraculous cures by using West's techniques. West touts his science as the key to achieving the promises associated with the Word of Wisdom, and he alleges that the federal government, the American Medical Association, and pharmaceutical companies are involved in a secret combination to keep West's science from the knowledge of the public.³⁴ "Health missionaries" devoted to West's teachings take a "vow of poverty" and an "oath of obedience," surrendering all their property to an Orem-based organization called the International Academy of Lymphology, which assumes responsibility for meeting their financial needs as they promote West's ideas and related products.³⁵

Mitchell encountered West in 1993, when his wife's stepfather went to the neuropath hoping to be cured of cancer. West's ideas coincided with convictions Mitchell already held about the virtues of vegetarianism and the existence of secret combinations in the government.³⁶ It appears that Mitchell tried to make a living for a time by selling *The Golden Seven Plus One*, and he and Barzee lived briefly with West on two occasions after they had become homeless. As Immanuel, Mitchell tried unsuccessfully to proselytize West, who in turn urged Mitchell to return to the LDS Church.³⁷ Notwithstanding, *The Book of Immanuel* praises West as an Elias raised up to "shed far greater light and truth upon my

Word of Wisdom and my laws of health." Mitchell's revelations anticipate that the Lord will "raise up a people to live on this earth in peace, without pain or disease," a catchphrase from *The Golden Seven Plus One* expressing West's vision of the millennial age that will be ushered in by adherence to his teachings.³⁸

In *The Book of Immanuel*, the Lord says that Ezra Taft Benson "testified unto many that Samuel [West] was my servant and that the book, *The Golden Seven Plus One* was inspired of God."³⁹ While I have not been able to confirm that Benson endorsed West's book, it is not implausible that he did so: Benson was a well-known advocate of alternative medicine.⁴⁰ Mitchell, West, and Benson all form part of a larger LDS subculture that views alternative medicine as integral to the fabric of the restored gospel.

3. ULTRACONSERVATIVE POLITICS

WHEN THE CHURCH was persecuted for polygamy, it defended itself by professing devotion to the Constitution and decrying federal tyranny.⁴¹ Since then, most Saints have assimilated in the American political mainstream; but the older, hardline tradition of constitutionalism, coupled with accusations of government tyranny, has survived in an LDS subculture devoted to ultraconservative politics. During the Cold War, the subculture's most prominent representatives were Ezra Taft Benson, Verlan H. Anderson, and W. Cleon Skousen.⁴²

With the collapse of Communism at the end of the 1980s, ultraconservatives transferred their fear of conspiracy from Communism to what the John Birch Society calls the "New World Order." After the Gulf War, when President George Bush gave a speech

pledging America's commitment to building a "new world order," ultraconservatives became convinced the U.S. government was now part of the conspiracy.⁴³ Fears about the global political situation and the specter of federal tyranny produced an apocalyptic climate, no doubt intensified by the opening of the final decade of the millennium. Survivalists, "superpatriots," and citizens' militias became national news.

LDS traditions about emergency preparedness and the horrors of the last days helped legitimize ultraconservative apocalypticism in the eyes of many Saints. So did Ezra Taft Benson's position as Church president, which allowed devotees to ele-



President Ezra Taft Benson

Ezra Taft Benson's position as Church president allowed devotees to elevate his ultraconservative politics to the status of prophecy.

RADICALIZED PROPHETS OF THE FAR, FAR RIGHT

MITCHELL'S TRANSFORMATION INTO Immanuel has analogues in the radicalization of other ultra-conservative Saints prominent during the early 1990s. Note how in each of the following cases, alienation from the Church led to increasingly extreme—increasingly Mitchell-like—behavior, including claims to prophetic or quasi-prophetic authority.



BO GRITZ joined the Church in 1984, in response to a visionary experience in the jungles of Southeast Asia, where he had been searching for missing American POWs. Around the same time, Gritz achieved national notoriety for alleging that the federal government was involved in the drug trade. Seven years later, Gritz published

Called to Serve, which warned that the Constitution was “hanging by a thread” due to a “secret combination” within the U.S. government. In 1992, Gritz ran as presidential candidate for the far-right Populist Party on a platform that included abolishing the income tax and the federal reserve (which LDS constitutionalist Cleon Skousen had long criticized as well).

When the Church began to crack down on ultraconservatives, Gritz proclaimed his allegiance to President Benson and hinted that other Church leaders were now in league with the New World Order. Gritz resigned from the Church after his stake president refused to renew his recommend until Gritz proved he had paid his income taxes. Thereafter, Gritz moved increasingly to the political and theological right. In 2000, he founded the Fellowship of Eternal Warriors (the FEW), a religious fraternity led by twelve “warrior-priests” who have been “Set-Apart, Anointed, and Ordained” to combat the Satanic New World Order. The Fellowship appears to subscribe to a white supremacist ideology that regards Northern Europeans as the house of Israel—an extreme version of a belief once prevalent among Latter-day Saints and also espoused by Mitchell.

Like Mitchell, Gritz was once arrested on kidnapping charges, after he had tried to help a woman forcibly regain custody of her 12-year-old son. This arrest occurred a few months before he founded the FEW.

STERLING ALLAN, a lifelong Latter-day Saint, was only twenty-six years old when he founded the popular but ill-fated American Study Group. Inspired by President Benson's call to study the Book of Mormon, Allan had earlier produced a book-length manuscript that used Book of Mormon history as a pattern for predicting events of the last days. The year after Church intervention led to the col-

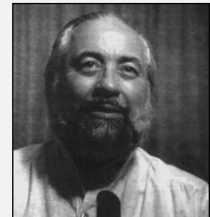


lapse of his study group, Allan tried to approach the podium during General Conference to deliver a talk warning the Church that it was moving towards apostasy. In November 1992, the same month as the Church's “housecleaning” campaign, Allan fled to a remote location in California, convinced that nuclear holocaust was imminent.

Upon his return home to Manti in January 1993, Allan was excommunicated for his allegiance to teachings of Avraham Gileadi. At first, Allan, like Gileadi, attempted to regain his membership, having received personal revelation that God wanted him to submit to Church authority. Eventually, however, Allan accepted his excommunication as liberating. He now maintains several web sites and electronic lists catering to ultraconservative Saints in and out of the Church. These include GreaterThings.com, PatriotSaints.com, RemnantSaints.com, and the Yahoo group David's Outcasts.

Allan has said that, like Mitchell, he once considered running off with a 14-year-old girl. This was during a period of life when, also like Mitchell, Allan believed himself to be “the one mighty and strong.” Most recently, Allan has announced on his website that a recently discovered Bible code implores him to run for president in 2004 and predicts that he will win.

JAMES HARMSTON and his wife Elaine, in response to President Benson's exhortations, had been studying the Book of Mormon when they became troubled by departures from revealed teachings and practices by the contemporary Church. They sought answers directly from the Lord by performing in their home the rituals associated with the true order of prayer. Spiritual manifestations followed.



By 1989, Harmston had quit his job, trusting that the Lord would provide. A year later, the Harmstons moved to Manti, where they discovered that they were part of an apparently spontaneous gathering of ultraconservative Saints alarmed by such things as the Church's support of the New World Order and changes in Church doctrine and ritual. The Harmstons began holding meetings in their home where like-minded Saints could study and discuss their concerns. In October 1992, the Harmstons were excommunicated as part of the mounting Church campaign against ultraconservatives. Denouncing the LDS Church as apostate, Harmston founded the True and Living Church of Jesus Christ of Saints of the Last Days in 1994.

Like Mitchell, Harmston claims to have received the keys of the kingdom by direct revelation—in Harmston's case, a visitation by Enoch, Noah, Abraham, and Moses. Also like Mitchell, Harmston has embraced plural marriage and has been accused of preying on teenage girls.

vate his ultraconservative politics to the status of prophecy. Though they perceived themselves as followers of the Prophet, ultraconservatives realized that the majority of Saints did not share their outlook. This produced a tendency for ultraconservatives to view themselves as a vanguard within the Church who discerned the present dangers more clearly than most because they paid closer attention to prophetic counsel than most. In 1986, Benson had preached that the Church was “under condemnation” for ignoring the Book of Mormon, with its warnings against secret combinations and apostasy;⁴⁴ as ultraconservatives became increasingly alienated from the LDS mainstream, they came to understand Benson’s speech as a warning against apostasy within the Church itself. Benson’s incapacitation in the early ’90s sparked rumors among ultraconservatives that he was being muzzled by false leaders who wanted to squelch his prophetic warnings.⁴⁵

In the early ’90s, Church leaders moved to check the ultraconservative surge. The American Study Group, a popular gathering for Saints interested in prophecies of the last days, survivalism, and the far-right politics of Bo Gritz, folded in 1991 after Church leaders cautioned members not to participate in the group.⁴⁶ Popular ultraconservative scriptorian Avraham Gileadi saw his book *The Last Days* pulled from the shelves of Deseret Book, was instructed by Church leaders to stop writing and teaching, and was eventually excommunicated.⁴⁷ Shortly after the November 1992 presidential election, when ultraconservative LDS candidate Bo Gritz won nearly 50,000 votes in the Mormon corridor,⁴⁷ the Church launched a “housecleaning” campaign. Local leaders were warned to be on the lookout for members who fit a profile that included sympathies with the John Birch Society, meeting in study groups, “inordinate” preoccupation with food storage or prophecies of the last days, a conviction that Church leaders were muzzling President Benson, and interest in the teachings of Gileadi or Gritz.⁴⁹

Though the Church denied reports that this “housecleaning” yielded hundreds of excommunications,⁵⁰ the campaign certainly produced a crisis within the ultraconservative subculture. Some, like Gileadi, submitted to Church authority. Others went underground, quietly awaiting the day when God would cleanse his apostate Church. Others became even more radicalized, as in the case of the Manti Saints who broke away in 1994 to form the True and Living Church of Jesus Christ of Saints of the Last Days.⁵¹ [See sidebar page 39]

Mitchell took part in the ultraconservative surge of the early 90s. I submit, in fact, that his transformation into Immanuel needs to be understood as his own radicalized response to the Church’s rejection of ultraconservatism. *The Book of Immanuel* is saturated with the apocalyptic outlook typical of Latter-day Saints with these leanings, including a fear of the New World Order.⁵² Relatives have told reporters that in the early 1990s, Mitchell became involved with anti-government radicals who professed to know how to apply for exemption from federal taxes. We know that Mitchell was one of the more than 28,000 Utahns who voted for Bo Gritz in 1992; as part of their transition into homelessness, Mitchell and Barzee lived for a time in one of the “constitutional covenant communities” Gritz

founded in Idaho, where patriots could gather to defend themselves against the New World Order.⁵³ Mitchell is believed to have attended meetings of the American Study Group.⁵⁴ He plainly admired Avraham Gileadi, whose 1994 book, *The Literary Message of Isaiah*, ranks among Mitchell’s “seven diamonds plus one” and provides the non-King James translations of Isaiah quoted in *The Book of Immanuel*.⁵⁵

Like other ultraconservatives, Mitchell regards Ezra Taft Benson as the last of the true prophets. *The Book of Immanuel* recounts how sometime in the year before Benson’s death in 1994, Mitchell had a revelation in the Salt Lake Temple in which the

Lord condemned the Saints for rejecting Benson’s testimony and denounced Church leaders as wolves who merely “pretended to uphold my prophet Ezra” while seeking “to take the kingdom by force.” In response to the Church’s apostasy, the Lord transferred “the keys of priesthood . . . authority that Ezra held into [the] hands” of Mitchell, who would henceforth be known as Immanuel David Isaiah.⁵⁶ The study fellowship Mitchell founded in 1997 is, in fact, nothing less than the “true and living Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints in its purified and exalted state.”⁵⁷ This organization had exactly two members: Mitchell and his wife Barzee, though Mitchell apparently expected to make additional converts.⁵⁸

Mitchell’s understanding of his role in God’s plan is derived from Avraham Gileadi’s teachings about a Davidic servant—a temporal Messiah who will restore the kingdom of Israel before the Second Coming. In *The Last Days*, Gileadi claims that the Davidic servant will suffer in the similitude of Christ at the hands of the wicked in a kind of temporal redemptive sacrifice on Israel’s behalf.⁵⁹ The prophecies from Isaiah that Gileadi be-

Ultraconservative Saints remain preoccupied with separating themselves from worldly influences and are strongly nostalgic for the days when people sacrificed everything for the kingdom

OTHER HOMELESS WANDERERS

IT IS RARE for ultraconservative Saints to opt for homelessness: they are more likely to express extreme separatism by becoming survivalists or trying to live the law of consecration. Yet besides Mitchell and Barzee, I have encountered two other examples of individuals who either considered or embraced homelessness as a lifestyle: one an LDS ultraconservative, the other a non-Mormon admired by LDS ultraconservatives.

FOLLOWING his excommunication in 1993, STERLING ALLAN (see photo, page 39), founder of the American Study Group, moved from Manti to Tucson to pursue a graduate degree. He felt isolated and torn by conflicting impulses: to submit to Church leaders in order to be rebaptized or to embrace his conviction that the Lord was calling him to a mighty work. Eventually the emotional turmoil became so great that he walked away from everything:

I packed one little duffel bag with a sleeping bag, a change of clothes, my scriptures; and I walked out of my apartment with the intention of never returning; leaving a note regarding how to dispose of . . . my possessions. For two days I hitchhiked [n]orth an inch at a time, pouring over the scriptures and pleading in my trembling heart to the Lord for understanding and guidance. . . . The scriptures say that a man must leave “all” for the kingdom of God’s sake. Was he calling me out now, or was I taking things into my own hands. . . . Were I to return out of fear of leaving the world behind, then my chances of ever being a truly effective instrument in God’s hands would be annihilated. I believed that leaving Babylon was a true principle, but I had serious doubts about the timing and the manner in which I was doing it.

Allan finally concluded that the Lord did not want him to leave Babylon at that time, and he returned to conventional life in society.

THE second individual refuses to disclose his legal name, though he has hinted that his first name is Fred. Fred, who was raised Baptist, now goes by the name JESUS ELIJAH MOSES as a result of a 1993 vision in which he ascended into heaven and became one with those three beings. Fred refuses to use his legal name, social security number, or signature because he believes that these are the name, number, and mark of the beast foretold in the Book of Revelation. Fred has thus cut himself off from society. Like Mitchell, Fred wears white robes and a beard, has spent time as a homeless wanderer, and believes he is the bearer of a prophetic message.



In 2000, Fred somehow encountered Sterling Allan online. Allan was fascinated by Fred and forwarded their correspondence to his ultraconservative LDS Yahoo group, David’s Outcasts. Allan and other subscribers to David’s Outcasts admire Fred (whom they call JEM) for his uncompromising anti-materialism, self-sacrifice, and integrity; subscribers have welcomed Fred into their homes as he has wandered the country. Allan opines that Fred has a bona fide “mission” to “interface with the downtrodden of society.” Curiously, no one on David’s Outcasts has noted the strong parallels between Jesus Elijah Moses and Immanuel David Isaiah.

believes refer to this suffering Davidic servant are applied to Mitchell himself in *The Book of Immanuel*—including the prophecy that Mitchell will be “numbered with criminals.”⁶⁰ While Mitchell has failed to convince anyone except Barzee that he has indeed been called to play the role he claims, there are possibly thousands of Latter-day Saints who believe that the role needs to be filled.⁶¹

4. SEPARATION FROM THE WORLD

MITCHELL’S DECISION TO embrace homelessness as a lifestyle may at first seem to be “far afield” of Mormon tradition. But in fact, Mitchell’s homelessness is an extension of nineteenth-century Mormon traditions about separating from the world and preaching without purse or scrip.⁶² Post-accommodation Mormonism no longer calls the Saints to gather into communities literally separated from the world and is more practical about providing for its traveling ministers. But ultraconservative Saints remain preoccupied with separating themselves from worldly influences (rock music, R-rated movies) and are strongly nostalgic for the days when people sacrificed everything for the kingdom.

While many mainstream Church members also seek to be separate from the world, ultraconservatives take things to a level mainstream Saints find extreme. Mitchell, for instance, would walk out of movies that contained profanity, and he reportedly padlocked the television, presumably to keep his stepchildren from watching it unsupervised. In the early 90s, Mitchell’s desire to separate himself from worldly influences developed into a desire to separate himself from society altogether. Eventually, he and Barzee would sell all their possessions and become homeless hitchhikers—their way of fulfilling the command to depart from Babylon.⁶³ As Immanuel, Mitchell panhandled for a living (or survived on the largess of family and friends), thus literally fulfilling the scriptural injunction that the Lord’s messengers be without purse or scrip.⁶⁴ [See sidebar this page.]

It’s not clear exactly when Mitchell became convinced that God wanted him to be a prophet to the homeless. But he was no doubt inspired by Rick Joyner’s *The Final Quest*, which ranks among *The Book of Immanuel*’s seven diamonds plus one.⁶⁵ Joyner is a prominent charismatic Christian who teaches that the outpouring of revelation which marked the apostolic age must be restored in the last days.⁶⁶ *The Final Quest* is one of Joyner’s revelations, an allegorical dream-vision

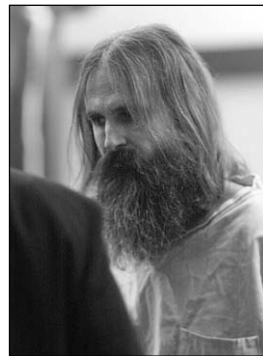
depicting the apocalyptic battle between good and evil. At one point in *The Final Quest*, Joyner is clothed in a “mantle of humility”—a dirty, ragged cloak, which Joyner says “made me look . . . like a homeless person.” Joyner is told, however, that this mantle is “the highest rank in the kingdom” and that “the Lord is closer to the homeless than to kings.”⁶⁷ Later in the vision, standing before God’s throne, Joyner meets a man named Angelo, who in life had been a homeless street preacher. Joyner is guilt-stricken to realize that he had once seen Angelo preaching and had dismissed him as “a religious nut.” Angelo then asks Joyner to “remember my friends, the homeless. Many will love our Savior if someone will go to them.”⁶⁸ It’s not clear how Joyner, who makes a living selling Christian products through his North Carolina-based MorningStar Ministries, has embraced that call, but Mitchell took Angelo’s plea to heart.⁶⁹

CONCLUSION

Not so bizarre or delusional after all

THOUGH ACCOMMODATION HAS moved contemporary Mormonism towards the mainstream, many Saints continue to subscribe to nineteenth-century beliefs and attitudes. This has yielded subcultures within the LDS community composed of people nostalgic for supernatural manifestations, devoted to alternative medicine and ultraconservative politics, and with unusually strong impulses to separate themselves from the world. This is the kind of Mormonism Mitchell embraced when he gave up drugs and returned to the Church, hoping to bring order to his life. By the standards of accommodation-driven Mormonism, Mitchell’s brand is indeed “bizarre” and “far afield” of contemporary Church teaching, but that fact is an indication of how far Mormonism has shifted from some of the impulses that first shaped it.

Mitchell is not a random “nut” who just happened to have come out of the woodwork when he did. At the same time that Mitchell was turning into Immanuel, other LDS ultraconserva-



The appearance of Immanuel David Isaiah is a dramatic sign of unresolved tension between Mormonism’s past and present. The man in white robes who preached to the homeless just blocks from Temple Square is a product partly, it may well be, of mental illness, but also of an ongoing tug-of-war between what Mormonism once was and what it is trying to become.

tives were becoming similarly radicalized in response to upheavals in global politics and increasing alienation from their church. Unlike other radicalized ultraconservatives, though, Mitchell seems to have been driving a car with no brakes: his behavior became steadily more extreme until it surpassed anything his analogues had done. Still, Mitchell needs to be understood as part of a larger trend: an unforeseen consequence of the conflict between the LDS Church and its ultraconservatives during the early 1990s.

Ironically, convicting Mitchell of Smart’s abduction may require recognition of the affinity between Mitchell’s beliefs and LDS tradition. When Ron and Dan Lafferty were tried for murdering their sister-in-law and her baby in response to what they believed was a revelation from God, Utahns witnessed an ironic spectacle: prosecutors producing witnesses to show that what the

Laffertys believed was not so unlike what most Latter-day Saints believe. Prosecutors had to make this move in order to rebut the contention that the Laffertys were insane and therefore incompetent to stand trial.⁷⁰ If Mitchell’s defense lawyers enter a plea of not guilty by means of insanity, Latter-day Saints, thus far keen to distance themselves from Mitchell, may have to testify that Mitchell’s beliefs aren’t so unlike their own—aren’t so bizarre or delusional—after all.

Mitchell now sits in jail, silent, his father reports, like “Christ, standing mute before Pilate.”⁷¹ Mitchell probably understands his incarceration in light of Gileadi’s teachings about the suffering Davidic servant, which means he probably anticipates that God will eventually intervene spectacularly on his behalf. At the time I write this, the courts have not yet ruled whether Mitchell is competent to stand trial, nor have experts released an official diagnosis of Mitchell’s psychological condition. But for me, this much is clear: the appearance of Immanuel David Isaiah is a dramatic sign of unresolved tension between Mormonism’s past and present. The man in white robes who preached to the homeless just blocks from Temple Square is a product partly, it may well be, of mental illness, but also of an ongoing tug-of-war between what Mormonism once was and what it is trying to become. ☞

NOTES

1. "Official Statement About Brian and Wanda Mitchell," 13 Mar. 2003 <<http://www.lds.org/newsroom/showrelease/0,15503,4044-1-15957,00.html>>.
 2. Michael Janofsky, "Kidnapping Case Puts Mormons on Defensive," *New York Times*, 24 Mar. 2003, A10.
 3. John R. Llewellyn, "Abduction Case of Elizabeth Smart," 16 Mar. 2003 <www.polygamybooks.net/lawsmart.htm>.
 4. Perhaps the most unusual effort to counter negative press about Mormonism appeared in a *Deseret News* article titled "From Faith to Fanatic Delusion". Quoting Rodney Stark, the article suggested that LDS readers should actually be flattered their faith has produced such a long list of high-profile fanatics (Bruce Longo, the Laffertys, the Singer/Swapp clan, the LeBarons). All faiths produce extremists, the article proposed, but because LDS communities are so well organized, Mormon extremists are more likely to be apprehended, and thus gain media attention. Carrie A. Moore, "From Faith to Fanatic Delusion," *Deseret News*, 16 Mar. 2003, A1+.
 5. "Erroneous Reporting of Elizabeth Smart Case," 24 Mar. 2003 <<http://www.lds.org/newsroom/mistakes>>. The charge of "nonsense" was directed specifically at an article in an Australian paper which had asserted that Mormon beliefs "renounced [by the Church] but still practiced by a fundamentalist minority . . . are at the core of this story" (Gerard Wright, "Kidnapped in the Name of God," *Sydney Morning Herald*, 24 Mar. 2003 <<http://www.smh.com.au/articles/2003/03/23/1048354476047.html>>). It's hard to see how that is not a fair description of the Church's relationship to plural marriage, nor of the role Mitchell's beliefs about plural marriage were alleged to have played in the Smart kidnapping.
 6. Maggie Haberman and Jeane MacIntosh, *Held Captive: The Kidnapping and Rescue of Elizabeth Smart* (New York: Avon, 2003), 65; Moore, A15; Janofsky, A10.
 7. Vicki Cottrell, a long-time friend of Barzee's and executive director for the Utah chapter of the National Alliance for the Mentally Ill, has opined that Barzee is "bipolar with delusional features" and that Mitchell is schizophrenic (Elaine Jarvik and James Thalman, "Complex Picture of Pair Emerges," *Deseret News*, 14 Mar. 2003, A5). Mitchell's second ex-wife, Debbie Kravitz, has told reporters she believes Mitchell's claim to revelation is "a fraud, a mask that would let him abuse young girls" (Haberman and MacIntosh, 77); Kravitz has accused Mitchell of molesting her daughter during their marriage. Mitchell's father has also expressed skepticism about the sincerity of his son's religious convictions, opining that the real reason Mitchell changed his name and became homeless was to evade the IRS and state authorities looking to collect back child support payments (Haberman and MacIntosh, 66).
 8. Mitchell's family history can be found in a manuscript by Brian's father: Shirl V. Mitchell, "Spokesman for the Infant God or Goddess," unpublished typescript, 2 vols., 1997 (available at the Special Collections of the Marriott Library, University of Utah). Shirl reports that he is descended from Benjamin T. Mitchell, one of the first settlers in the Salt Lake Valley, a stonemason for the Salt Lake Temple, and a polygamist with six wives. Benjamin Mitchell's descendants became alienated from the Church, passing on the story that Benjamin had been cheated by Church leaders out of most of his substance.
 9. Biographical information for Mitchell is taken from *Held Captive*, by Haberman and MacIntosh, who synthesized information published in various news outlets with additional interviews they themselves conducted with relatives of Mitchell and Barzee (Christy Karras, "First Smart Book in Stores," *Salt Lake Tribune*, 2 July 2003, B5).
 10. My source for the excommunications having occurred in the same week as Smart's disappearance is Brandon Griggs, "Mitchell's Journey to Immanuel," *Salt Lake Tribune*, 30 Mar. 2003, A1. However, *Newsweek* is under the impression that the excommunication occurred "long ago," and from an interview with Church historian Richard Turley, the *New York Times* seems to have come away under the impression that the excommunication happened "several years ago." (See Dirk Johnson, "Finding Elizabeth," *Newsweek*, 24 Mar. 2003, 37; Michael Janofsky, "Kidnapping Case Puts Mormons on Defensive," *New York Times*, 24 Mar. 2003, A10.) The Church has not issued a public clarification.
 11. "The Book of Immanuel David Isaiah," unpublished manuscript, 6 Apr. 2002, 1. A pdf copy of the handwritten manuscript, with original page numbers, can be downloaded from <<http://www.sltrib.com/2003/Mar/03142003/Manifesto/book.pdf>>. However, the pdf copy is missing pages 16-17, evidently due to a scanning error. A complete html transcript, without page numbers, is available at <<http://deseretnews.com/dn/view/0,1249,465033465,00.html>>.
- Contrary to the common report that Mitchell's revelations are "rambling," *The Book of Immanuel* is no more "rambling" than Joseph Smith's revelations in the

Doctrine and Covenants; indeed, Mitchell's revelations are less prone to tangents or long, snarled sentences than Smith's. Also *The Book of Immanuel* is more tightly structured than the Doctrine and Covenants. Where the Doctrine and Covenants is simply a collection of unconnected revelations in mostly chronological order, *The Book of Immanuel* was apparently conceived as a whole, unified by the recurring seven-plus-one pattern (which Mitchell derives from C. Samuel West's *The Golden Seven Plus One*). There are seven-plus-one items in the canon Mitchell draws up for his study and fellowship society; and Sections Four, Five, Six, and Seven of *The Book of Immanuel* refer, respectively, to the books that appear as items 4 through 7 in Mitchell's canon.

12. Haberman and MacIntosh, 48.
13. *Book of Immanuel*, 23.
14. *Ibid.*, 19.
15. *Ibid.*, 4.
16. *Ibid.*, 5.
17. Two of the most commonly cited histories of accommodation are Jan Shippo, *Mormonism: The Story of a New Religious Tradition* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1985) and Armand L. Mauss, *The Angel and the Beehive: The Mormon Struggle with Assimilation* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1994).
18. During an interview with Mike Wallace aired on CBS's *60 Minutes*, 7 Apr. 1996, Hinckley declared "We're not a weird people." This was subsequently paraphrased as, "We are not weird" (see, for example, Kenneth L. Woodward, "A Mormon Moment," *Newsweek*, 10 Sept. 2001, 48).
19. The routinization of charisma is a widely deployed concept derived from Max Weber; see "The Nature of Charismatic Authority and its Routinization," *Weber on Charisma and Institution*, ed. Samuel N. Eisenstadt (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1968), 48-65. On the routinization of apostolic charisma in the LDS Church, see D. Michael Quinn, *The Mormon Hierarchy: Extensions of Power* (Salt Lake: Signature, 1997), 1-6.
20. "Too often people feel that answers to their prayers and their pleading for guidance and direction will be given in dramatic manifestations or through a direct voice giving specific directions from a heavenly host" (Robert D. Hales, "Gifts of the Spirit," *Ensign* [Feb. 2002]: 18-19). Dallin H. Oaks has enjoined the Saints to "be cautious in sharing spiritual experiences" and not to "mention miracles in bearing their testimonies" (quoted in John L. Hart, "Teaching, Learning 'by the Spirit,'" *LDS Church News*, 2 Jan. 1993, 11; *The Lord's Way* [Salt Lake: Deseret Book, 1991], 96). In his well-known address, "Our Strengths Can Become Our Downfall," Oaks cautions against several tendencies typical of the LDS subcultures from which Mitchell emerges: self-promoting faith healers, charismatic teachers, excessive patriotism, delving into the mysteries, seeking to sacrifice more than the Church requires, and citing the teachings of President Benson to justify not paying taxes (*Ensign* [Oct. 1994]: 11-20).
21. One manifestation of this undercurrent is a subculture within the Church fascinated by such things as folklore about the Three Nephites or—as noted later in this article—accounts of near-death experiences, which serve to reinforce traditional LDS beliefs about the world beyond and about the access to supernatural powers that the restored gospel provides. However, materials on these subjects are rarely produced by the Church-owned press, *Deseret Book*, indicating the marginal status that such experiences now occupy in LDS discourse.
22. Betty J. Eadie (with Curtis Taylor), *Embraced by the Light* (New York: Bantam, 1992). The book was originally published by Gold Leaf Press, a division of Aspen Books.
23. Peggy Fletcher Stack, "Mormon's Book on Afterlife Gains National Response," *Salt Lake Tribune*, 23 Oct. 1993, D2.
24. Despite the Church's official silence, Boyd K. Packer told a meeting of local priesthood leaders that the book was "bunk." (See Stack, "Mormon's Book.") An excellent review of the appearance of Eadie's book and LDS reactions to it is Massimo Introvigne, "Embraced by the Church?: Betty Eadie, Near-Death Experiences, and Mormonism," *Dialogue: A Journal of Mormon Thought* 29, no. 3 (Fall 1996): 99-119.
25. Arvin S. Gibson, *Glimpses of Eternity* (Bountiful, Utah: Horizon, 1992); Arvin S. Gibson, *Echoes from Eternity* (Bountiful: Horizon, 1993); Brent L. and Wendy C. Top, *Beyond Death's Door* (Salt Lake City: Bookcraft, 1993); Arvin S. Gibson, *Journeys Beyond Life* (Bountiful: Horizon, 1994); Lawrence E. Tooley, *I Saw Heaven!* (Bountiful: Horizon, 1997); Elaine Durham, *I Stand All Amazed* (Orem, Utah: Granite, 1998).
26. Mitchell subscribes to the traditional LDS belief that there can be but one true church, sustained by priesthood authority, so it is perhaps surprising that *The Book of Immanuel* endorses *Embraced by the Light*, which denies that there is one true church (one of the chief complaints lodged against the book by orthodox Latter-day Saints). The section of *The Book of Immanuel* that discusses Eadie's book

is unusual, too, in that it is the least apocalyptic of Mitchell's revelations: the Lord's voice is uncharacteristically tender (*Book of Immanuel*, 14).

27. When individuals or groups break away from the Church to form new LDS sects, they often produce oracular revelations, translations of lost scripture, or accounts of visitations by divine beings in the manner of Joseph Smith. They thus implicitly (if not explicitly) fault the LDS Church for having lost the charisma that, for these breakaway groups, is indispensable to the Restoration. Two recent examples of this phenomenon would be the True and Living Church of Jesus Christ of Saints of the Last Days, founded on the revelations of James D. Harmston <http://www.helpingmormons.org/TLC_Manti/index.html>, and the Brotherhood of Christ Church (a breakaway movement from the Reorganized Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints, whose prophet, Goker Harim III, has used a Urim and Thummim to translate two volumes of a sealed record by the brother of Jared <<http://www.sealedportion.com>>).

28. *Book of Immanuel*, 25–26.

29. For a history of the Church's changing attitudes towards medicine, see N. Lee Smith, "Herbal Remedies: God's Medicine?", *Dialogue: A Journal of Mormon Thought* 12, no. 3 (Fall 1979), 37–60.

30. Norm Lee Smith, "Why Are Mormons So Susceptible to Medical and Nutritional Quackery?", *Journal of Collegium Aesculapium* 1 (1983): 29–44; Nancy Bringham, "Medical Magic! A Cure for All That Ails," *BYU Today* 39, no. 1 (Jan./Feb. 1985): 32–36. Several factors combine to produce the Saints' susceptibility to quackery: continued trust in statements by nineteenth-century leaders who endorsed herbalism and denounced medicine; belief in the accessibility of the supernatural and therefore a readiness to believe in quasi-miraculous cures; a conviction that God can reveal keys of health that surpass the merely mortal knowledge of medical professionals ("the arm of flesh"); a corollary mistrust of medical experts, coupled with faith in testimonials; devotion to free agency, translated into resentment of government attempts to regulate alternative health practices or products; and a desire to control one's own health, growing out of the principle of self-reliance. The Saints' continuing faith in natural remedies has given Utah a reputation as the "Silicon Valley" of herbal and vitamin supplements (Steven Oberbeck, "National Suppliers of Herb Products Are Native to Utah," *Salt Lake Tribune*, 8 Nov. 1992, C1; Glen Warchol, "Feds Urge Ephedra Warnings," *Salt Lake Tribune*, 1 Mar. 2003, A1).

31. Partly in response to requests by health professionals, the Church has issued statements warning the Saints against quackery: "Which Temple Ye Are," *Church News*, 19 Feb. 1977, 16 (note the vignette about a nineteenth-century faith healing that ironically—intentionally?—accompanies this editorial); "Health Fads May Hurt," *Church News*, 18 June 1977, 16; *Missionary Health Manual* (Salt Lake: Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, 1988), 17. Specifically, the Church has cautioned against practitioners who use testimonials to support their claims, who argue against established practices, or who claim to be persecuted by medical associations. These statements demonstrate the Church's commitment to accommodation—to promoting a rational worldview that respects the expertise of science and equates what is credible with what is mainstream.

32. C. Samuel West, *The Golden Seven Plus One: Conquer Disease with Eight Keys to Health, Beauty, and Peace* (Orem, Utah: Samuel Publishing, 1981). The "seven golden plus one" refers to seven principles of health which God directed West to identify and synthesize from the work of other researchers, plus a formula West was inspired to write expressing the principles in a kind of symbolic shorthand.

33. *Ibid.*, 234–44.

34. Though West aims to reach a broad audience and therefore does not explicitly cite LDS scripture in his book, catchphrases or concepts from LDS scripture are readily identifiable. See pages 22, 84–90, 95–97, 113, 136.

35. This information about the workings of the IAL emerged during a series of meetings with the Utah County Board of Equalization, which wondered whether the IAL was a multi-marketing scheme masquerading as a tax-exempt religious organization. Representatives for the IAL protested that because theirs was a religious organization, local government had no right to even question them regarding their tax-exempt status. Curiously, the leader of the IAL, a man styling himself Reverend Kerry R. Smith, told the Board of Equalization that West is an "emeritus person" in the IAL and therefore "not authorized" to act in its name; this appears to be partly an effort to distance the IAL from a website West had created to promote his products in a plainly secular, for-profit fashion. "Board of Equalization Minutes," 23 Feb. 1999, 23 Mar. 1999, and 27 Apr. 1999 (available online at <<http://www.utahcountyonline.org/Depu/COMMISH/BrdEqualMins/index.asp>>).

Connected to the IAL is an organization called the World-Wide Blood Protein Research Society, which claims to fall under the IAL's religious tax exemption <<http://www.ial.org>>. A non-religious corporation called the Healing Arc promotes West's products through what is explicitly a kind of multi-level marketing

scheme <<http://www.thehealingarc.net>>. Also, West sits on the board of directors of HydraLife, a natural health products company headquartered in Draper, Utah <<http://www.hydralife.com/html/team.html>>.

36. From the time of his first marriage, Mitchell insisted on eating whole wheat bread—something Bruce R. McConkie cited as a sign of fanaticism ("Fanaticism," *Mormon Doctrine*, 2nd ed. [Salt Lake: Bookcraft, 1966], 275). During his marriage to Barzee, Mitchell is said to have followed a "regimen of eating mostly organic herbs and vegetables" (Haberman and MacIntosh, 26, 30, 58). Mitchell's enthusiasm for vegetarianism, like his far-right-wing politics, is probably the result of his upbringing: Mitchell's father, Shirl, pushed what he calls a "frugivorous and herbivorous" diet on his family and has evinced a hatred of coercive government (i.e., government efforts to ensure minorities' rights) that sounds either archconservative or libertarian ("Spokesman," 2:18, 434–35).

37. Haberman and MacIntosh, 63–65, 71–72. The last time Mitchell worked for West was in 1998, just one year before the IAL's troubles with the Utah County Board of Equalization. It's not clear if Mitchell was ever, either in 1993–94 or 1998, a "health missionary" for the IAL; but the IAL's consecration-like system of providing for its "missionaries" would likely have appealed to Mitchell at a time when he was trying to cut himself free from material entanglements.

38. *Book of Immanuel*, 9–10. To West's catchphrase about raising up a people to "live upon the earth in peace, without pain or disease," Mitchell adds the phrase "with no poor among them," reflecting his particular interest in a Zion where poverty is done away.

39. *Ibid.*, 10.

40. LDS medical professionals decrying quackery among the Saints were circumspect about Benson's support for alternative medicine, no doubt because of his status in the LDS hierarchy. When *Dialogue* published an interview with an alternative health practitioner who claimed endorsement from one of the Twelve, the name of the apostle in question was censored. Kay Gillespie's commentary on this same interview referred elliptically to the Church's concern that "the names of some church leaders are being associated with nonmedical treatments and practices" ("Quackery and Mormons: A Latter-Day Dilemma," *Dialogue: A Journal of Mormon Thought* 12, no. 4 [winter 1979]: 78–79). By contrast, an outraged letter in response to a special *Dialogue* issue on quackery and other health issues boasted Benson's support for alternative medicine (Scott S. Smith, "Hypocritical Oath," *Dialogue: A Journal of Mormon Thought* 13, no. 3 [fall 1980]: 5). Benson's grandson, Steve Benson, does not remember ever hearing his grandfather speak of C. Samuel West, but he has confirmed Benson's enthusiasm for an alternative therapy called chelation (Steve Benson, email correspondence, April 2003).

41. One example is John Taylor's fervent appeal: "Will they please tell us wherein we have violated the laws or the Constitution of the United States? Will any of the savants at Washington, or anywhere else, tell us what we have done? . . . They passed a law which we consider unconstitutional, and which interferes with our religious rights. . . . They are seeking to deprive you and me and thousands of people in this Territory of religious liberty, without trial, without investigation. They have proceeded on the principle of tyranny and coercion, if not on the principle of blood, just as Cain did" (*Journal of Discourses* 24:352).

42. For a political insider's view of the rise of LDS ultraconservatism in the 1950s and '60s, see David S. King, "The Principle of the Good Samaritan Considered in a Mormon Political Context," *Dialogue: A Journal of Mormon Thought* 5, no. 4 (winter 1970): 11–22. For a history of the tension between ultraconservatives and the LDS mainstream, see D. Michael Quinn, "Ezra Taft Benson and Mormon Political Conflicts," *Dialogue: A Journal of Mormon Thought* 26, no. 2 (summer 1993): 1–87.

43. JoAnn Jacobsen-Wells, "John Bircher Recruits Join Fight against New World Order," *Salt Lake Tribune*, 21 June 1992, B1; Christopher Smith, "John Birch Director Calls Utah Fertile Ground for His Society," *Salt Lake Tribune*, 14 May 1993, D1.

44. Ezra Taft Benson, "The Book of Mormon—Keystone of Our Religion," *Ensign* (Nov. 1986): 4–7.

45. President Gordon B. Hinckley's October 1992 General Conference address about the Church's "backup system" was a response to these rumors. Gordon B. Hinckley, "The Church Is on Course," *Ensign* (Nov. 1992): 53–59. See also the sources listed in footnote 49.

46. Shortly before it folded, the group was reported to have "more than 5,000 participants" and 35–40 chapters. Peggy Fletcher Stack and Chris Jorgensen, "World Events Prove End Is Near, Group Says," *Salt Lake Tribune*, 3 Sept. 1991, A1; Dawn House, "Group Studying Apocalypse Calls It Quits," *Salt Lake Tribune*, 29 Oct. 1991, B1; Sterling D. Allan, "The American Study Group," 9 Aug. 2002 <http://www.greaterthings.com/Constitution/American_Study_Group>.

47. Peggy Fletcher Stack, "LDS Scholar's Book Pulled, Sparks 'Davidic'

Debate," *Salt Lake Tribune*, 11 July 1991, C1; Lavina Fielding Anderson, "The LDS Intellectual Community and Church Leadership: A Contemporary Chronology," *Dialogue: A Journal of Mormon Thought* 26, no. 1 (spring 1993): 35, 52; "Six Intellectuals Disciplined for Apostasy," *SUNSTONE* (Nov. 1993): 65-66.

48. Christopher Smart, "Populist Party Candidate Bo Gritz Visits the State Where 28,391 Voters Declared: 'He's Our Beau,'" *Salt Lake Tribune*, 6 Nov. 1992, A1.

49. Chris Jorgensen and Peggy Fletcher Stack, "It's Judgment Day for Far Right: LDS Church Purges Survivalists," *Salt Lake Tribune*, 29 Nov. 1992, A1; "LDS Church Disciplines Ultra-conservative Survivalists," *SUNSTONE* (Mar. 1993): 67-68; Anderson, 56.

50. Peggy Fletcher Stack, "LDS Church Says Survivalist Ouster Overblown," *Salt Lake Tribune*, 4 Dec. 1992, B1.

51. For a history of the rise of the True and Living Church (TLC), see Becky Johns, "The Manti Mormons: The Rise of the Latest Mormon Church," *SUNSTONE* (June 1996): 30-36.

52. For an implicit reference to U.S. participation in the New World Order, see *Book of Immanuel*, 11, where the Lord denounces the United States for seeking "in concert" with all other nations (probably referring to the United Nations) "to bring the whole earth into complete subjection."

53. Haberman and MacIntosh, 61-63, 68. Regarding Gritz's Idaho communities, see Mark Pitcavage, "Patriot Purgatory: Bo Gritz and Almost Heaven," *Anti-Defamation League Online*, 26 Mar. 1996 <<http://www.adl.org/mwd/gritz.asp>>; Nicholas K. Geranios (AP), "'Almost Heaven' and Other Bo Gritz Communities Seem Almost Normal in Their Setting," *Salt Lake Tribune*, 7 Nov. 1999, J6.

54. Sterling D. Allan, "Mitchell and Me: What Role Did I Play in Fostering Elizabeth Smart's Abductor?," 16 Mar. 2003 <http://www.greaterthings.com/Davidic_Servant/Mitchell_and_me.htm>.

55. Avraham Gileadi, *The Literary Message of Isaiah* (New York: Hebraeus, 1994). Aimed at a broad (i.e., not primarily LDS) audience, this book contains Gileadi's own complete translation of the Book of Isaiah, prefaced by essays providing analysis and commentary. Gileadi's Isaiah translation had already been published for an LDS audience as *The Book of Isaiah: A New Translation with Interpretive Keys from the Book of Mormon* (Salt Lake: Deseret Book, 1988).

56. *Book of Immanuel*, 17-18.

57. *Ibid.*, 8.

58. In *Book of Immanuel*, 17, the Lord promises to provide Mitchell with "one hundred and forty and four thousand spokesmen to declare all my words which I shall give unto thy mouth."

59. Avraham Gileadi, *The Last Days: Types and Shadows from the Bible and the Book of Mormon*, 3rd ed. (Orem, Utah: Book of Mormon Research Foundation, 1998). On the suffering Davidic servant, see especially ch. 4.

60. *Book of Immanuel*, 18-19; cf. Gileadi's translation of Isaiah 52:13-15 and 53:1, 11-12 in *The Literary Message of Isaiah*.

61. Sterling Allan "guesses" (his word) that the number of Latter-day Saints who believe in a Davidic servant is 300,000. I suspect this is a gross exaggeration; however, we are clearly dealing with a widespread phenomenon. Allan's survey of attitudes among Davidic servant believers, although "completely unscientific" (again his words), is nevertheless instructive as one insider's description of the ultraconservative fringe. "Inside Mitchell's Head: General Anatomy of 'One Mighty and Strong' Fanaticism," 18 Mar. 2003 <http://www.greaterthings.com/Davidic_Servant/Mitchell_Survey/index.html>.

62. The scriptural basis for LDS separatism includes D&C 38:28-32; 78:13-14; 133:14-15. Preachers are enjoined to travel without purse or scrip in D&C 84:78-84.

63. Haberman and MacIntosh, 52, 56, 66-67. That LDS convictions about leaving Babylon motivated Mitchell and Barzee can be seen from a letter Barzee sent her family shortly after the couple began their transition to homelessness in 1995; in the letter, Barzee denounces her family for affiliating with "Babylon."

64. *Book of Immanuel*, 22.

65. Rick Joyner, *The Final Quest* (New Kensington, Penn.: Whitaker House, 1996). *The Book of Immanuel* calls Joyner a true prophet raised up to minister to the Lost Ten Tribes of Israel, which Mitchell understands as referring especially to people of Northern European descent (*Book of Immanuel*, 25-26). Joyner's book appeared while Mitchell and Barzee were hitchhiking around the country, and the book is not well-known among LDS ultraconservatives, so how Mitchell came across it is unknown. Sterling Allan theorizes that Mitchell encountered the book after Allan introduced it to people in ultraconservative networks along the Wasatch Front. (Allan had learned of the book from a friend in Colorado.) Allan, "Mitchell and Me."

66. A hostile but informative introduction to Joyner's teachings is G. Richard

Fisher, "The Higher Life of Rick Joyner: Chasing the Delusion of Power and Dominion," *The Quarterly Journal* 20, no. 4; available online at <<http://www.pfo.org/r-joyner.htm>>.

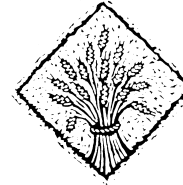
67. Joyner, 55-56.

68. *Ibid.*, 150-156.

69. According to homelessness activist Pamela Atkinson, Mitchell became known as "the preacher man" within Salt Lake's homeless community. He was unpopular because of his aggressive preaching, and people generally avoided him. "Utah Cops Admit Mistakes in Smart Case," *CBSNews.com*, 14 Mar. 2003 <<http://www.cbsnews.com/stories/2003/03/14/national/main544115.shtml>>.

70. Jon Krakauer, *Under the Banner of Heaven: A Story of Violent Faith* (New York: Doubleday, 2003); see chap. 23.

71. "Mitchell and Barzee behind Bars," *KUTV.com*, 8 May 2003 <http://kutv.com/related/local_story_128194358.html>.



SELF-PORTRAIT BEFORE TIME

*For a child will be born to us, a son will be given to us;
And the government will rest on His shoulders; To establish it and to
uphold it with justice and righteousness from then on and
forevermore. —FROM ISAIAH 9:6-7*

My mother has us both in white, she in a night gown, I wrapped in a blanket. Her hair is still naturally red. The bottom of her dress curls, as if colossal waves of wind are beating in through the window in front of us. She looks into it, like a farmer staring down an approaching cyclone, or peacefully watching one depart, already resigned to the damages. She holds me so that I too face out the window, into the dry air, away from her squinting eyes, her stern pursed lips. This is how she loved me at times, devoutly, she brandished me as the pious clench God before them in battle. Because fear is selfish, I will cast it out of me. Because lies are unjust, I will tell *the truth*. Because I was sent, because her hand flows over the bruises on my head like a fast moving creek, I will ransom her world or become it.

—MICHAEL COLLINS