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# John Corrill

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1794–1842

D&C 50:38; 52:7

After listening to missionaries preach in Harpersville, Ohio, John penned, “I was obliged to acknowledge in my own mind, that the meeting had been inspired by some supernatural agency.”<sup>1</sup> He invited the missionaries to lodge in his home for the evening so he could learn more about the Restoration. John was baptized on January 10, 1831, in Kirtland, Ohio. Following his baptism, he was ordained an elder and served a mission to New London, Ohio, baptizing many who were willing to accept the new faith in spite of bitter opposition.

John attended the fourth conference of the Church, held at the schoolhouse on the Isaac Morley farm in Kirtland. At the conference, he was ordained a high priest by Lyman Wight. From this point on, his leadership among the Saints was acknowledged at every turn. In Jackson County, Missouri, he served as second counselor to Bishop Edward Partridge. On July 23, 1833, he offered himself “as a ransom for the Church, expressing ... willing[ness] to be scourged or to die if that would appease the anger of the mob against the Saints.”<sup>2</sup> Less than two months later, John was appointed one of ten high priests to oversee the ten Missouri branches.

In November 1833 mobs forced him to flee from his home in Independence and cross the Missouri River to Clay County. In 1836 John was the surveyor of Far West, Caldwell County. On May 22, 1837, he was appointed “Keeper of the Lord’s Store House” and in 1838 was elected a state representative to the legislature. As a member of the Missouri

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<sup>1</sup> John Corrill, *A Brief History of the Church of Latter-day Saints (commonly called Mormons), Including an Account of Their Doctrine and Discipline, with the Reasons of the Author for Leaving the Church* (St. Louis: John Corrill, 1839), 7–9.

<sup>2</sup> *History, 1838–1856*, volume A-1 [23 December 1805–30 August 1834], 351. Joseph Smith Papers.

legislature, he wrote or was privy to nearly every correspondence exchanged between Latter-day Saints and Missouri Governor Lilburn W. Boggs.

As John saw persecution against the Latter-day Saints supported by government officials, he wrote, "I felt it was necessary for me to look out for my own safety."<sup>3</sup> He distanced himself from the Church. Joseph Smith tried to persuade him to change his course and wrote on August 30, 1838,

I spent considerable time today in conversation with Brother John Corrill. ... Brother Corrill's conduct for some time had been very unbecoming, especially in a man in whom so much confidence had been placed. He said he would not yield his judgment to anything proposed by the Church, or any individuals of the Church, or even the Great I Am, given through the appointed organ, as revelation, but would always act upon his own judgment, let him believe in whatever religion he might.<sup>4</sup>

At the Richmond hearings held in November 1838 in the town of Richmond, Missouri, John testified for the prosecution against Joseph Smith and other Latter-day Saint prisoners.

When the Saints fled from the government-sanctioned extermination order in Missouri, John refused to budge. He stayed behind, feigning the need to fulfill his role as a state representative. In 1839 he wrote the pamphlet *Brief History of the Church of Latter-day Saints (commonly called Mormons), Including an Account of Their Doctrine and Discipline, with the Reasons of the Author for Leaving the Church*. In the pamphlet, John revealed his apostate leanings: "Much exertion has been used to confute and put down their [Mormon] doctrine, but as foolish as it is, their elders have been able to compete with and baffle their opponents."<sup>5</sup> He was excommunicated in March 1839 in Quincy, Illinois.

On March 21, 1841, John wrote to Samuel A. Arthur of Liberty, Missouri:

Sir I have just returned from Nauvoo. ... The Mormons are naturally poor and what property there is among them Jo and his associates contrives to make use of for public or Church uses. ... They keep the work a going on but this only serves to reduce and enslave these people. ... You would not be safe for he [Joseph Smith] had boys there that would put a ball through you quick as he would snap his

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<sup>3</sup> Corrill, *Brief History of the Church of Latter-day Saints*, 37.

<sup>4</sup> Smith, *History of the Church*, 3:65–66.

<sup>5</sup> Corrill, *Brief History of the Church of Latter-day Saints*, 45.

thumb. ... I must confess that I found their feelings much more hostile than I expected.<sup>6</sup>

John died in 1842 in Adams County, Illinois.

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<sup>6</sup> John Corrill letter to Samuel A. Arthur, 21 March 1841, Liberty, MO. Church History Library.