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## The Twelve Apostles

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**Abstract:** Biographical essays on early Latter-day Saint apostles Orson Pratt, John F. Boynton, and Lyman E. Johnson.

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*"What thou seest, write in a book."* REV. 1:11.

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## THE TWELVE APOSTLES.

### ORSON PRATT,

A member of the first quorum of Twelve Apostles, was born in Hartford, Washington County, N. Y., September 19, 1811. He was a son of Jared and Charity (Dickinson) Pratt, and a brother of Apostle Parley P. Pratt. His parents were hardworking and poor people, and he was accustomed to labor from his boyhood, during which time the family removed to New Lebanon, in Columbia County, where he attended school part of the time each year until 1825, acquiring a common school education, and becoming familiar with arithmetic and bookkeeping. He also studied the Bible. From the time he was eleven years old, he worked at farming in different places, attending school in the winter, going to Lorain County, Ohio, in the fall of 1827, and in the fall of 1828 performed a journey of nearly seven hundred miles to Connecticut; went thence to Long Island, and in the winter of 1829-30 studied geography, grammar and surveying, at a boarding academy.

He was a prayerful as well as studious youth, although neither he nor his parents connected themselves with

any of the religious denominations. In September, 1830, his brother Parley P. Pratt, who had embraced the gospel as taught by Joseph Smith, the Prophet, came with another Elder to Canaan, Columbia County, N. Y., where Orson was residing. He then received their testimony and was baptized September 19, 1830, his birthday, being then nineteen years old. In the following month he traveled two hundred miles to see Joseph Smith, in Fayette, Seneca County, N. Y., and on the 4th of November received through the Prophet the revelation to be found in the Doctrine and Covenants, Section 34, in which he was called of God to preach the gospel, to lift up his voice both long and loud, to cry repentance, and prepare the way before the coming of the Lord.

He was confirmed and ordained an Elder December 1, 1830, and went on his first mission to Colesville, Broome County, N. Y., and in the early part of 1831, went on foot to Kirtland, Ohio, where the Prophet had removed, a distance of about three hundred miles. He then performed several missions in Ohio, Illinois and Missouri, baptizing many converts. At a conference held in Amherst, Ohio, he was

set apart, June 25, 1832, to preside over the Elders, and was sent on a mission to the Eastern States. February 2, 1832, he was ordained a High Priest, after which he traveled and preached without purse or scrip, through Ohio, Pennsylvania, New Jersey and New York City to Long Island, thence northeast through part of Vermont into New Hampshire, preaching and baptizing by the way and making many converts in Bath, N. H., and Charleston, Vt. Next he proceeded to the southern part of Connecticut, and had continued success. After laboring in these parts till the fall of 1832, he started west, traveling some three or four hundred miles, preaching, baptizing, ordaining men to the ministry, and laboring in many parts of New York. He returned to Kirtland, Ohio, February 17, 1833, having traveled on foot about 4,000 miles, baptized 104 persons and organized several new branches.

In Kirtland he attended the School of the Prophets during the winter, boarding with the Prophet Joseph, and in the following spring he again went East, performing another successful mission, traveling 2,000 miles in six months, and baptizing over fifty persons. After this he remained in Kirtland about two months, laboring on the House of the Lord, and on November 27th started on another mission to the eastern churches. He returned to Kirtland February 13, 1834, having traveled about one thousand miles.

Thirteen days later he was started out again with Elder Orson Hyde on a special mission, on which he was absent about two months, traveling 800 miles. He next traveled with Zion's Camp to Missouri, being captain of a company. On July 7th he

was ordained one of the standing High Council in Missouri, where he also visited the scattered churches in Clay County, and in August was sent eastward, traveling through Illinois and Indiana to Ohio, suffering severely through fatigue and ague, arriving in Kirtland April 26, 1835, on which day he was ordained one of the Twelve Apostles, under the hands of David Whitmer and Oliver Cowdery. On May 4th, he went on another mission to the Eastern States, being absent a little over six months. During the winter and early spring he taught a grammar school in Kirtland, and also studied Hebrew, and then received his endowments in the Kirtland Temple. His next mission was to Canada West, on which he left April 6, 1836. While absent he baptized many persons and raised up several branches of the Church.

On July 4th he married Sarah M. Bates, whom he had baptized in Sackett's Harbor, N. Y., June 18, 1835. In the fall, having returned to Kirtland, he studied algebra, and after providing a home for his wife, went to the State of New York and labored in the ministry during the winter of 1837-38. In April, 1839, the Saints having been driven from Far West, he went there to fulfill a revelation, and with several of the Twelve, met at the corner stone of the Temple, whence they parted to preach the gospel to foreign nations. On July 4th he was the means of delivering his brother Parley from prison in Columbia, Missouri.

In the fall he preached through the Eastern churches, and in the spring of 1840 embarked for England, preached nine months in Edinburgh, Scotland, raised up a branch of over 200 per-

sons, and in the spring of 1841 returned to America. He went to Nauvoo, where he took charge of a mathematical school, then took a mission through the Eastern States in the summer of 1843, and on his return in the fall was elected a member of the city council, helped to draw up a memorial to Congress and went to Washington to present it in the spring of 1844. He labored among the churches east until the news of the martyrdom of the Prophet was received, when he returned to Nauvoo.

During the difficulties that succeeded the death of the Prophet and Patriarch, he labored with the Twelve, which was the presiding quorum of the Church, in the management of its affairs, shared in the expulsion from Nauvoo, crossed the plains with the Pioneers in 1847, and on the way, when weather would permit, took astronomical and other scientific observations, determining, by the aid of the sextant and circle of reflection, the latitude and longitude of the most prominent places, the changes in elevation above sea level, etc., in anticipation of the great highway which even then it was expected by the Saints would span this vast continent. He was the first to enter Salt Lake Valley, having preceded the main body of the company three days.

In 1848 he was appointed president over all the branches of the Church in England, Scotland, Wales, Ireland and adjacent countries, starting from Winter Quarters on the 11th of May. The number of Church members in Great Britain then was about eight thousand, which during his presidency of two years was increased to about thirty-one thousand. In this short

period he chartered and fitted out about twenty ships loaded with Saints for Utah. In the midst of this press of business, he wrote some fifteen pamphlets, and published and circulated several hundred thousand of them in different languages. At the same time he edited the *Millennial Star*, and increased its circulation from less than four thousand to nearly twenty-three thousand. He lectured, at different times, to large audiences in the principal cities of England and Scotland.

In 1850 he returned to Great Salt Lake Valley, and in the winter of 1851 delivered a series of twelve astronomical lectures to crowded audiences in the old Tabernacle, which were published in the *Deseret News*. He was elected a member of the Legislative Assembly during its first session, and at each successive session when he was in the Territory, and seven times was chosen speaker of the House.

In 1852 he was appointed on a mission to Washington, to take the presidential charge of all the churches in the United States and British Provinces east of the Rocky Mountains, and there published *The Seer*. In the spring and summer of 1853 he again went on a mission to Europe, returning the following year. On April 22, 1856, he again started for England and presided over the European Mission, publishing more pamphlets, and returned by way of California, while the army was *en route* to Utah, arriving home in January, 1858. On September 23, 1860, he was called on a mission to the United States, being gone about one year. On April 24, 1864, he was set apart for a mission to Austria. He went to that land in

1865, accompanied by Elder W. W. Riter, but in consequence of the stringent laws was unable to open the door of the Kingdom to that nation. He bore his testimony to the authorities and left, going over to England, where he visited the conferences and labored assiduously, returning August 4, 1867. In 1869 he went to New York City and transcribed and published the Book of Mormon in phonetic characters called the Deseret Alphabet.

On August, 1870, he held the famous three days' discussion with Dr. J. P. Newman on the subject of polygamy, totally routing that debater, for which he never forgave the "Mormons."

At the adjourned General Conference in 1874, he was appointed and sustained Historian and General Church Recorder, which position he retained till his decease.

On July 18, 1876, he once more left his home to cross the ocean, this time to transcribe and publish an edition of the Book of Mormon in the Pitman phonetic characters. He was, however, soon called home and returned September 27th. On the 3rd of September, 1878, he started east with Apostle Joseph F. Smith, visiting the Whitmers in Missouri, the Hill Cumorah and other places figuring in the history of the Church, and returned on the 3rd of October. On December 3rd, of the same year, he started again for England to stereotype the Book of Mormon and Doctrine and Covenants, which he arranged in verses, with foot notes and references. From this important and laborious mission he returned September 2, 1879. After his arrival home he attended a number of Stake conferences, and was again elected a member of the legis-

lature, acting in his usual capacity of speaker of the House. After this his health was poor, and finally he finished his long and useful career, on October 3, 1881, when he died at his residence in Salt Lake City. For a little over a year he had suffered severely from diabetes, and was much of the time unable to leave his room. On Sunday, September 18, 1881, he delivered his last public address in a clear and forcible manner, speaking to a large congregation in the Tabernacle about twenty minutes.

Orson Pratt was the last of the original council of the Twelve Apostles of the Church. He crossed the Atlantic Ocean sixteen times on missions of salvation. He found time to study the higher mathematics, and in addition to his published scientific books left an elaborate work in manuscript on the Differential Calculus, containing original principles. He was the father of sixteen sons and sixteen daughters, and had forty-three grandchildren.

Following is a list of some of the works which he has published: Divine Authority; Kingdom of God, in four parts; Remarkable Visions; Divine Authenticity of the Book of Mormon, in six parts; Reply to "Remarks on Mormonism;" Great First Cause; New Jerusalem; Absurdities of Immaterialism; *The Seer*, in eighteen numbers; Eight Tracts on the First Principles of the Gospel; Cubic and Biquadratic Equations; Key to the Universe, or a New Theory of its Mechanism, etc., etc.

By way of finishing his obituary, the editor of the *Deseret News* wrote at the time of his death:

"Orson Pratt was truly an Apostle of the Lord. Full of integrity, firm

as a rock to his convictions, true to his brethren and to his God, earnest and zealous in defense and proclamation of the truth, ever ready to bear testimony to the latter-day work, he had a mind stored with scripture, ancient and modern, was an eloquent speaker, a powerful minister, a logical and convincing writer, an honest man and a great soul who reached out after eternal things, grasped them with the gift of inspiration, and brought them down to the level and comprehension of the common mind. Thousands have been brought into the Church through his preaching in many lands, thousands more by his writings. He set but little store on the wealth of this world, but he has laid up treasures in heaven which will make him eternally rich."

#### JOHN F. BOYNTON,

A member of the first quorum of Twelve Apostles, was born September 20, 1811, in Bradford, Essex County, Mass., baptized in September, 1832, by Joseph Smith, in Kirtland, Ohio, and ordained an Elder by Sidney Rigdon. He performed a mission, together with Zebedee Coltrin, to Pennsylvania in 1832 and another one to Maine in 1833 and 1834. On February 15, 1835, he was ordained an Apostle in Kirtland, Ohio, after which he accompanied the Twelve on their mission to the Eastern States and Canada. He was married to Susan Lowell by Joseph Smith, January 20, 1836. During his last mission he borrowed all the money he could among the brethren, with which he entered into the mercantile business with Lyman E. Johnson, and followed it until he apostatized and was disfellowshipped from the quorum

of Apostles September 3, 1837, in Kirtland, Ohio. On the following Sunday he made confession and was forgiven, but as he did not repent of his evils, he was finally cut off from the Church.

About Boynton's subsequent life Ariot H. Hale, of Grantsville, writes: "Since the Nauvoo days Boynton has resided in Syracuse, N. Y., where he still lives. He has always been considerate to his former friends and co-laborers in the ministry, and never said or did anything against the Church. When he visited Utah in 1872, he called on President Brigham Young twice, in my company. The President was then a prisoner in his own house, guarded by U. S. marshals, and Boynton denounced in strong terms the persecutions then being carried on against the Saints. He also met Erastus Snow who, when only sixteen years of age, was ordained a Teacher by Boynton. Brother Snow told him that he had been preaching the same gospel ever since. Boynton remarked, 'Stick to it, for it is good.' He also called on Orson Pratt and others, with whom he was very friendly, and they all called him Brother John."

Since leaving the Church Boynton has never joined himself to any other denomination and does not believe in any religion whatever. He says, however, that if anything is right "Mormonism" is. For twenty years he traveled throughout the United States lecturing on natural history, geology and other sciences. In 1853 or 1854 he was appointed by the government to make a trip to California on a geological surveying expedition, and during the war of the rebellion he was employed in the invention of torpedoes and other destructive implements of

war. He has his name in the national patent office for thirty-six patents on different inventions. During the last eight or ten years he has been gathering the genealogy of the Boynton family, and is in this respect doing a great deal of good. He has been married thrice. His first wife died, the second left him, and he is now living with his third wife.

#### LYMAN E. JOHNSON,

A member of the first quorum of Twelve Apostles, was born in Pomfret, Windsor County, Vermont, Oct. 24, 1811. He was baptized in Feb., 1831, by Sidney Rigdon, ordained an Elder and subsequently a High Priest by Joseph Smith, called to the ministry in Nov., 1831 by revelation, and performed missionary labor in Ohio, the Eastern States and Nova Scotia. In 1834 he went to Missouri as a member of Zion's Camp, and was ordained an Apostle Feb. 14, 1835, in Kirtland, Ohio, after which he performed a mis-

sion to the Eastern States. He studied the Hebrew language in the winter of 1835-36, and after returning from another mission to the East in the fall of 1836 he entered into merchandising and soon after apostatized. At a conference held in Kirtland, Sept. 3, 1837, he was disfellowshipped, but made confession and was restored to his former standing a few days later. His repentance, however, was not genuine, and on April 13, 1838, he was excommunicated from the Church in Far West, Caldwell County, Mo. Until his death he remained friendly to his former associates, making frequent visits to Nauvoo, after the Saints had located there. He relinquished his business of merchandising and commenced to practice law, locating himself in Davenport, Iowa. A few years later he removed to Keokuk, Iowa, where he continued his practice, and was finally drowned in the Mississippi River at Prairie du Chien, Wis., Dec. 20, 1856.

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### THE CROOKED RIVER BATTLE.

Late in the evening of October 24, 1838, news reached Far West, Caldwell County, Mo., that the Rev. Samuel Bogart with a mob of about seventy-five men were committing depredations on Log Creek, destroying property and taking prisoners. On hearing the report, Elias Higbee, the first judge of the county, ordered Lieutenant-Colonel George M. Hinkle, the highest officer in command in Far West, to raise a force to disperse the mob and retake their prisoners, whom, it was reported, they intended to murder that night. The trumpet sounded, and the brethren assembled on the

public square about midnight. Captain David W. Patten, Parley P. Pratt and Charles C. Rich, with about forty others, volunteered, which number the judge thought sufficient, but upon the suggestion of Brother Rich, who believed a battle was inevitable, more men were raised by him in the small settlements on Goose and Log creeks, which increased the force to about seventy-five men when they all met together about six miles from Far West. The company was divided into small companies of ten, and then proceeded by the main road, four miles, to a point near Crooked River.