

The Following are Quotes Regarding the Apostasy and Restoration of Thomas B. Marsh

The Strippings of Milk Story

Elder George A. Smith, April 6, 1856

Journal of Discourses, Vol.3, p.283

***[Geoage A. Smith describes the "strippings of milk" story--one of the
incidencts that lead to Thomas B. Marsh's apostasy]***

You may think that these small matters amount to but little, but sometimes it happens that out of a small matter grows something exceedingly great. For instance, while the Saints were living in Far West, there were two sisters wishing to make cheese, and, neither of them possessing the requisite number of cows, they agreed to exchange milk.

The wife of Thomas B. Marsh, who was then President of the Twelve Apostles, and sister Harris concluded they would exchange milk, in order to make a little larger cheese than they otherwise could. To be sure to have justice done, it was agreed that they should not save the strippings, but that the milk and strippings should all go together. Small matters to talk about here, to be sure, two women's exchanging milk to make cheese.

Mrs. Harris, it appeared, was faithful to the agreement and carried to Mrs. Marsh the milk and strippings, but Mrs. Marsh, wishing to make some extra good cheese, saved a pint of strippings from each cow and sent Mrs. Harris the milk without the strippings.

Finally it leaked out that Mrs. Marsh had saved strippings, and it became a

matter to be settled by the Teachers. They began to examine the matter, and it was proved that Mrs. Marsh had saved the strippings, and consequently had wronged Mrs. harris out of that amount.

An appeal was taken from the Teacher to the Bishop, and a regular Church trial was had. President Marsh did not consider that the Bishop had done him and his lady justice, for they decided that the strippings were wrongfully saved, and that the woman had violated her covenant.

Marsh immediately took an appeal to the High Council, who investigated the question with much patience, and I assure you they were a grave body. Marsh being extremely anxious to maintain the character of his wife, as he was the President of the Twelve Apostles, and a great man in Israel, made a desperate defence, but the High Council finally confirmed the Bishop's decision.

Marsh, not being satisfied, took an appeal to the First Presidency of the Church, and Joseph and his Counsellors had to sit upon the case, and they approved the decision of the High Council.

This little affair, you will observe, kicked up a considerable breeze, and Thomas B. Marsh then declared that he would sustain the character of his wife, even if he had to go to hell for it.

The then President of the Twelve Apostles, the man who should have been the first to do justice and cause reparation to be made for wrong, committed by any member of his family, took that position, and what next? He went before a magistrate and swore that the "Mormons" were hostile towards the State of Missouri.

That affidavit brought from the government of Missouri an exterminating order, which drove some 15,000 Saints from their homes and habitations, and some thousands perished through suffering the exposure consequent on this state of affairs.

Do you understand what trouble was consequent to the dispute about a pint of strippings? Do you understand that the want of fences around gardens, fields, and yards, in town and country, allowing cattle to get into mischief and into the stray pen, may end in some serious result? That the corroding influence of such circumstances may be brought to bear upon us,

in such a way that we may lose the Spirit of the Almighty and become hostile to the people? And if we should not bring about as mighty results as the pint of strippings, yet we might bring entire destruction to ourselves. If you wish to enjoy your religion and the Spirit of the Almighty, you must make your calculations to avoid annoyances, as much as possible.

Thomas B. Marsh Receives a Revelation

*President Heber C. Kimball, July 12, 1857
Journal of Discourses, Vol.5, p.28,*

[After the strippings of milk experience, Thomas B. Marsh was angry at the Prophet Joseph Smith. He prayed and received a revelation telling him what to do. The following is Heber C. Kimball's account of that revelation.]

How can you find out whether brother Brigham is called of God, except you have a revelation from God? And then some are not fully satisfied, but will doubt the revelation that God has given them.

You think you would not. I have known many who have. Oliver Cowdery received revelations and wrote them; so did David Whitmer, and so did Thomas B. Marsh. About the time he was preparing to leave this Church, he received a revelation in the Printing Office. He retired to himself, and prayed, and was humble, and God gave him a revelation, and he wrote it. There were from three to five pages of it; and when he came out, he read it to brother Brigham and me. In it God told him what to do, and that was to sustain brother Joseph and to believe that what brother Joseph had said was true. But no; he took a course to sustain his wife and oppose the Prophet of God, and she led him away.

What!--sustain a woman, a wife, in preference to sustaining the Prophet Joseph, brother Brigham, and his brethren! Your religion is vain when you take that course. Well, my wife may say, "If you will sustain Brigham in preference to me, I will leave you." I should reply, "Leave, and be damned!" and that very quickly. That is a part of my religion--"Leave quickly, you poor snoop."

*This is the letter Thomas B. Marsh wrote
to the First Presidency for permission to be
received
into the Church in full faith and fellowship:*

[After 18 years of apostasy, Thomas B. Marsh wanted to rejoin the Church. Leaving Missouri where he lived during his apostasy, he went to Council Bluffs, Iowa in January of 1857 and made peace with George W. Harris and asked to be accepted as a member of the Church. He was directed to Wandle Mace at Florence, Nebraska, who suggested he write to the First Presidency for permission. The following is Bro. Marsh's letter:]

Florence, Douglas Co, Nebraska Ter[ritory]
May 5th [18]57

Heber C Kimball

Dear Sir,

You see by the caption to this, where I am. I left Missouri Having lost my wife some three years since I began to awake to a sense of my situation; you will, perhaps, say why you slept a long time or was a long time in waking and would say truly for so it is for I have, at least, been grooping in darkness fo[r] so [sic] these 18 years.

I left Grundy Co, Missouri in the beginning of January A.D. /57, set my face Zionward and traveled, mostly on foot having a determination that I would go to Salt Lake, God being my helper, & there throw myself at the feet of the apostles and implore their forgiveness and ask for admittance into the House of the Lord; into the Church of Latter-day Saints & that I would say to them I know that I have sin[n]ed against Heaven and in thy sight and have rendered myself unworthy of your confidence; or of a place in the family of Heaven nevertheless make me thy servant lest I perish for I know that in my Father's house there is bread enough and to spare while

here I perish with hunger.

I came on with very good courage until after I had been here for some time; the longer I remain here & the more I examine into your progress since I left you the stronger I become in my confidence & the stronger I become in faith & the lighter things appear to me, the more clearly do I discover that I deserve no place among you in the church even as the lowest member; but I cannot live long so without a reconciliation with the 12 [apostles] and the Church whom I have injured O Bretheren once Bretheren!! How can I leave this world without your forgiveness Can I have it Can I have it? Something seems to say within yes O then hasten and signify it by writing the word yes to me & then O Joy I shall be content. I have met with G[eorge] W. Harris and reconsilation has taken place with us [this reconciliation has reference to the disagreement over the strippings. The case involved Elizabeth Marsh and Lucinda Morgan Harris, wife of George W. Harris], and when that was accomplished I was so overjoyed that I was constrained to say in my heart truely this is an evidence that the Lord loves me after all my rebellion & my sins. I know what I have done a mision was laid upon me & I have never filled it and now I fear it is too late but it is by another, I see, the Lord could get along very well without me and He has lost nothing by my falling out of the ranks; But O what have I lost?! Riches Greater Riches than all this world or many planets like this could afford but O bretheren; can you speak one word of comfort to me Can I be saved at all in the Kingdom of God Can I find peace among you O if I can but enjoy your smiles and the smil[e]s of the Church & of Jesus I shall be content to depart or remain in so great peace the Lord has been mindful of me and altho I was very stubborn He has followed me up He has visited me with Scourging & with visions & dreams, Bretheren O that I were worthy to call you bretheren! but [what] shall I call you? You run very near to me I love you better than I do any set of mortals on this earth. You have been diligent in accomplishing the work given you while I, miserable me! have played time away among harlot churches only seeking for nourishment to my soul where there was no bread of life & I Love you & hate myself. I wait here, at Florence anxiously for a letter addressed to your Old & now truely unworthy & truely sincere friend

Thomas B. Marsh

P.S. My Love to all the saints & may the richest blessings of the fullness of the everlasting Gospel be with and rest upon you now and forever more

Amen
T.B.M.

(Lyndon W. Cook, " 'I Have Sinned Against Heaven, and Am Unworthy of Your Confidence, But I Cannot Live without a Reconciliation' ":Thomas B. Marsh Returns to the Church," *BYU Studies*, Vol. 20, No. 4, p.396)

Thomas B. Marsh describes his apostasy

*The following are the
REMARKS BY THOMAS B. MARSH
he made to the Church in Salt Lake City in asking for
forgiveness of his sins against the Church.*

*The Bowery, Salt Lake City
Sunday, September 6th, 1857*

[In September of 1857, Thomas B. Marsh came to Salt Lake City seeking forgiveness from Church leaders. President Brigham Young invited him to speak to those of the Church. The following is a record of those proceedings.]

[Brigham Young introduced Thomas B. Marsh in the meeting with these words:]

Brother Thomas B. Marsh, formerly the President of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles, has now come to us, after an absence of nearly nineteen years. He is on the stand to-day, and wishes to make a few remarks to the congregation.

You will comprehend the purport of the remarks he wishes to make, by my relating a part of his conversation with me yesterday. He came into my office and wished to know whether I could be reconciled to him, and whether there could be a reconciliation between himself and the Church of the living God. He reflected for a moment and said, I am reconciled to the Church, but I want to know whether the Church can be reconciled to me.

He is here, and I want him to say what he may wish to. [Brother Marsh then arose, and the President continued.] Brethren and sisters, I now introduce to you brother Thomas B. Marsh. When the Quorum of the Twelve was first organized, he was appointed to be their President. (*Journal of Discourses*, Vol.5, p.207)

[The Remarks of Thomas B. Marsh:]

I do not know that I can make all this vast congregation hear and understand me. My voice never was very strong, but it has been very much weakened of late years by the afflicting rod of Jehovah. He loved me too much to let me go without whipping. I have seen the hand of the Lord in the chastisement which I have received. I have seen and known that it has proved he loved me; for if he had not cared anything about me, he would not have taken me by the arm and given me such a shaking.

If there are any among this people who should ever apostatize and do as I have done, prepare your backs for a good whipping, if you are such as the Lord loves. But if you will take my advice, you will stand by the authorities; but if you go away and the Lord loves you as much as he did me, he will whip you back again.

Many have said to me, "How is it that a man like you, who understood so much of the revelations of God as recorded in the Book of Doctrine and Covenants, should fall away?" I told them not to feel too secure, but to take heed lest they also should fall; for I had no scruples in my mind as to the possibility of men falling away.

I can say, in reference to the Quorum of the Twelve, to which I belonged, that I did not consider myself a whit behind any of them, and I suppose that others had the same opinion; but, let no one feel too secure: for, before you think of it, your steps will slide. You will not then think nor feel for a moment as you did before you lost the Spirit of Christ; for when men apostatize, they are left to grovel in the dark.

I have sought diligently to know the Spirit of Christ since I turned my face Zionward, and I believe I have obtained it. I have frequently wanted to know how my apostacy began, and I have come to the conclusion that I must have lost the Spirit of the Lord out of my heart.

The next question is, "How and when did you lose the Spirit?" I became jealous of the Prophet, and then I saw double, and overlooked everything

that was right, and spent all my time in looking for the evil; and then, when the Devil began to lead me, it was easy for the carnal mind to rise up, which is anger, jealousy, and wrath. I could feel it within me; I felt angry and wrathful; and the Spirit of the Lord being gone, as the Scriptures say, I was blinded, and I thought I saw a beam in brother Joseph's eye, but it was nothing but a mote, and my own eye was filled with the beam; but I thought I saw a beam in his, and I wanted to get it out; and, as brother Heber says, I got mad, and I wanted everybody else to be mad. I talked with Brother Brigham and Brother Heber, and I wanted them to be mad like myself; and I saw they were not mad, and I got madder still because they were not. Brother Brigham, with a cautious look, said, "Are you the leader of the Church, brother Thomas?" I answered, "No." "Well then," said he, "Why do you not let that alone?"

Well, this is about the amount of my hypocrisy--I meddled with that which was not my business. But let me tell you, my brethren and friends, if you do not want to suffer in body and mind, as I have done,--if there are any of you that have the seeds of apostacy in you, do not let them make their appearance, but nip that spirit in the bud; for it is misery and affliction in this world, and destruction in the world to come. I know that I was a very stiff-necked man, and I felt, for the first four or five years especially, that I would never return to the Church; but towards the latter part of the time, I began to wake up and to be sensible that I was being chastised by the Almighty; and I felt to realize the language of Jeremiah concerning Ephraim in the last days, where he says, "Is Ephraim my dear son? Is he a pleasant child? For since I spake against him, I do earnestly remember him still; therefore my bowels are troubled for him; I will surely have mercy on him, saith the Lord."

Thinks I, this language suits my condition. I then thought, I will go back and see if the Lord will heal me, for I am of the seed of Ephraim, and I felt troubled from that day, and my soul was vexed with the filthy conversation of those Sodomites. . . .

I have given you some items of my apostasy. I will now relate some of my recent experience.

When I got to Florence, or Winter Quarters, where I had to stay, waiting for an opportunity to cross the Plains, I read many of the publications and works of the Church, and became strengthened and informed in regard to the Priesthood of the Son of God. Although I knew something about the Priesthood before, so far as the theory was concerned, yet I discovered

that I had never properly understood it; and hence I feel that my faith is greatly strengthened. I wanted to get posted up and see what the "Mormons" had learned since I left them; and I learned very much by reading the discourses that had been preached here. (*Journal of Discourses*, Vol.5, p.207)

[After Bro. Marsh sat down, Briham Young stood and said:

Brigham Young: A portion of the congregation have heard what brother Marsh has said; but he spoke so low that you could not all hear. He wants to know whether this people are willing to receive him into full fellowship. When he came to Florence, he applied to brother Cunningham, who was then presiding there, for baptism. Brother Cunningham at first refused to baptise him, probably thinking that it would be better for him to wait till he came to this place; but he afterwards gave his consent to brother Marsh's being baptised. Brother Marsh now wishes to be received into full fellowship, and to be again baptised here.

There are many here who have formerly been acquainted with him--with his moral character, and they can judge as well as myself. Those who are not acquainted with him will be willing to coincide with the judgment of those who once knew him.

I shall call a vote, to ascertain whether the people are willing that he should be baptised into the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, and be acknowledged a member in full fellowship. I wish those who are willing to receive brother Marsh into full fellowship as a member in this Church and kingdom to manifest it by the uplifted hand. [All hands appeared to be raised.] If there are any who are not willing, they now have the privilege of manifesting it by the uplifted hand. [Not a hand was raised.]

Brother Marsh, I think that will be satisfactory to you.

T. B. Marsh: "It is, and I thank God for it." (*Journal of Discourses*, Vol.5, p.210)

[Though Bro. Marsh had been rebaptized in Florence, Nebraska, he was rebaptized again in Salt Lake on the same day the Church members sustained him.]

*The day after he was voted back into the Church
Brother Marsh formally dedicated himself to the Lord:*

I, Thomas B. Marsh, do hereby, this day, Sept. 7th AD 1857, consecrate and dedicate myself soul, body and spirit with all I possess on earth, to the Lord praying to the God of Abraham Isaac and Jacob to set me apart or sanctify me to be exclusively his to do whatsoever he should require of me and to give me Grace to sanctify the Lord of hosts in my heart that I might Love him with all my heart soul mind, strength and understanding Amen.

(Dedication of Thomas B. Marsh 7 September 1857, Brigham Young Collection, Church Archives)

The Conclusion to Life of Thomas B. Marsh

One month after his arrival in Salt Lake Valley, Thomas was married to Hannah Adams (4 October 1857), and the couple soon settled in Spanish Fork, where they acquired a small adobe house. Here Brother Marsh attempted, without success, to establish a school. Though having received some financial help from Bishop John L. Butler, the Marshes were scarcely able to sustain life. By late fall of 1859, meager circumstances prompted Thomas to request further assistance. His petition reflected his penitent spirit:

"[I write] not in a spirit of complaining of any person neither of murmuring against the providence of my Heavenly Father; no! It is good enough for me for I have sin[n]ed and made many crooked paths and I would rather kiss the chastning hand and thank Him that it is as well with me as it is for He in his providence has brought me to the Valies of these mountains! fed and clothed me and kept me alive untill now, given me a name and place among his

people and restored me, vile as I have been, [to] His Everlasting Priesthood, notwithstanding I so foolishly and so ignominiously once threw it away and cast it behind my back."

His request did not go unheeded.

On 11 March 1859, Thomas B. Marsh was re-ordained an elder, and by November 1861 he had been ordained a high priest. In the Endowment House on 1 November 1862, he received his endowment and was sealed to his wife, Hannah. It was about this same time that the couple opted to settle near Ogden. Thomas was placed in the care of David M. Stuart, Ogden First Ward. Though almost wholly supported by the Church until his death in January 1866 at Ogden, Thomas Baldwin Marsh "died in good faith," having once again accepted the principles he had espoused nearly thirty-six years earlier in Fayette, New York. He had learned by sad experience the hazards of aspiring to the honors of men, the dangers of exercising unrighteous dominion, and the consequences of uncontrolled criticism of those in authority

(Lyndon W. Cook, " 'I Have Sinned Against Heaven, and Am Unworthy of Your Confidence, But I Cannot Live without a Reconciliation' ": Thomas B. Marsh Returns to the Church," *BYU Studies*, Vol. 20, No. 4, p.400)

President Gordon B. Hinckley

"Small Acts Lead to Great Consequences,"
Ensign, May 1984, pp. 81-83

Now we are ready to return to our homes. We have been counseled by the Brethren and have been strengthened in our faith. As we are about to separate, I should like to emphasize the importance of watching the little things in our lives. Have you ever noticed a large gate in a farm fence? As you open it or close it there appears to be very little movement at the hinge. But there is great movement at the perimeter.

Speaking to the Prophet Joseph Smith in 1831, the Lord said: "Out of small things proceedeth that which is great." (D&C 64:33.) It is so with good or

evil, my brothers and sisters. Small, kind acts can grow into mammoth good institutions. The Boy Scout movement is an example of this as is known by anyone acquainted with the history of this great institution. It is so likewise with evil things. Small acts of dishonesty, small acts of an immoral nature, small outbursts of anger can grow into great and terrible things.

There stood once on the grounds right here, before ever this building was constructed, a bowery—a rather crude structure in which the Saints met in those days of their poverty. In September of 1857, there was presented in that old bowery on a Sunday afternoon, what was really the concluding act of a drama of great tragedy.

On that Sunday Brigham Young was conducting a meeting and introduced to the congregation a man who appeared to be old and infirm and weary of life.

Said President Brigham Young to the congregation:

“Brother Thomas B. Marsh, formerly the President of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles, has now come to us, after an absence of nearly nineteen years. He is on the stand to-day, and wishes to make a few remarks to the congregation. ...

“He came into my office and wished to know whether I could be reconciled to him, and whether there could be a reconciliation between himself and the Church of the living God. He reflected for a moment and said, I am reconciled to the Church, but I want to know whether the Church can be reconciled to me.

“He is here,” said President Young, “and I want him to say what he may wish to. ... Brethren and sisters, I now introduce to you Brother Thomas B. Marsh. When the Quorum of the Twelve was first organized, he was appointed to be their President.”

Brother Marsh rose to the pulpit. This man, who was named the first President of the Council of the Twelve Apostles and to whom the Lord had spoken in so marvelous a manner, as recorded in section 112 of the Doctrine and Covenants—which I wish you would read—said to the people:

“I do not know that I can make all this vast congregation hear and understand me. My voice never was very strong, but it has been very much weakened of late years by the afflicting rod of Jehovah. He loved me too much to let me go without whipping. I have seen the hand of the Lord in the chastisement which I have received. I have seen and known that it has

[page 82] proved he loved me; for if he had not cared anything about me, he would not have taken me by the arm and given me such a shaking.

“If there are any among this people who should ever apostatize and do as I have done, prepare your backs for a good whipping, if you are such as the Lord loves. But if you will take my advice, you will stand by the authorities; but if you go away and the Lord loves you as much as he did me, he will whip you back again.

“Many have said to me,” he continued, “ ‘How is it that a man like you, who understood so much of the revelations of God as recorded in the Book of Doctrine and Covenants, should fall away?’ I told them not to feel too secure, but to take heed lest they also should fall; for I had no scruples in my mind as to the possibility of men falling away.”

He continued, “I can say, in reference to the Quorum of the Twelve, to which I belonged, that I did not consider myself a whit behind any of them, and I suppose that others had the same opinion; but, let no one feel too secure; for, before you think of it, your steps will slide. You will not then think nor feel for a moment as you did before you lost the Spirit of Christ; for when men apostatize, they are left to grovel in the dark.” (*Journal of Discourses*, 5:206.)

Speaking in a voice that was difficult to hear, and appearing as an old man when he was actually only fifty-seven years of age, he spoke of the travails through which he had passed before he had finally made his way to the valley of the Great Salt Lake and asked that he might be baptized again into the Church.

I wondered, as I read that story so filled with pathos, what had brought him to this sorry state. I discovered it, in the *Journal of Discourses*, in a talk given to the [page 83] Saints in this same bowery the year before by George A. Smith. I think, if you’ll bear with me for a minute or two, it is worth the telling to illustrate to all of us the need to be careful in dealing with small matters which can lead to great consequences.

According to the account given by George A. Smith, while the Saints were in Far West, Missouri, “the wife of Thomas B. Marsh, who was then President of the Twelve Apostles, and Sister Harris concluded they would exchange milk, in order to make a little larger cheese than they otherwise could. To be sure to have justice done, it was agreed that they should not save the strippings (to themselves), but that the milk and strippings should all go together.

Now for you who have never been around a cow, I should say that the strippings came at the end of the milking and were richer in cream.

“Mrs. Harris, it appeared, was faithful to the agreement and carried to Mrs. Marsh the milk and strippings, but Mrs. Marsh, wishing to make some extra good cheese, saved a pint of strippings from each cow and sent Mrs. Harris the milk without the strippings.”

A quarrel arose, and the matter was referred to the home teachers. They found Mrs. Marsh guilty of failure to keep her agreement. She and her husband were upset and, “an appeal was taken from the teacher to the bishop, and a regular Church trial was had.” President Marsh did not consider that the bishop had done him and his lady justice for they (that is, the bishop’s court) decided that the strippings were wrongfully saved, and that the woman had violated her covenant.

“Marsh immediately took an appeal to the High Council, who investigated the question with much patience, and,” says George A. Smith, “I assure you they were a grave body. Marsh being extremely anxious to maintain the character of his wife, ... made a desperate defence, but the High Council finally confirmed the bishop’s decision.

“Marsh, not being satisfied, took an appeal to the First Presidency of the Church, and Joseph and his counselors had to sit upon the case, and they approved the decision of the High Council.

“This little affair,” Brother Smith continues, “kicked up a considerable breeze, and Thomas B. Marsh then declared that he would sustain the character of his wife even if he had to go to hell for it.

“The then President of the Twelve Apostles, the man who should have been the first to do justice and cause reparation to be made for wrong, committed by any member of the family, took that position, and what next? He went before a magistrate and swore that the ‘Mormons’ were hostile towards the state of Missouri.

“That affidavit brought from the government of Missouri an exterminating order, which drove some 15,000 Saints from their homes and habitations, and some thousands perished through suffering the exposure consequent on this state of affairs.” (*Journal of Discourses*, 3:283–84.) Such is George A. Smith’s account.

What a very small and trivial thing—a little cream over which two women quarreled. But it led to, or at least was a factor in, Governor Boggs’ cruel

exterminating order which drove the Saints from the state of Missouri, with all of the terrible suffering and consequent death that followed. The man who should have settled this little quarrel, but who, rather, pursued it, troubling the officers of the Church, right up to the Presidency, literally went through hell for it. He lost his standing in the Church. He lost his testimony of the gospel. For nineteen years he walked in poverty and darkness and bitterness, experiencing illness, and loneliness. He grew old before his time. Finally, like the prodigal son in the parable of the Savior (see Luke 15:11–32), he recognized his foolishness and painfully made his way to this valley, and asked Brigham Young to forgive him and permit his rebaptism into the Church. He had been the first President of the Council of the Twelve, loved, respected, and honored in the days of Kirtland, and the early days of Far West. Now he asked only that he might be ordained a deacon and become a doorkeeper in the house of the Lord.