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Worth Their Salt Too

Colleen Whitley

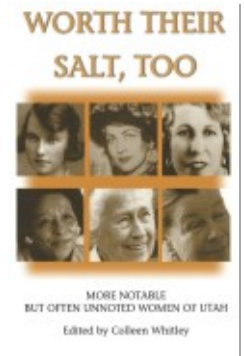
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LUCRETIA HEYWOOD KIMBALL

Pioneer in Utah's Early Christian Science Movement

Jeffery Ogden Johnson

Jeffery Ogden Johnson was born and raised in Aurora, Utah, a town sufficiently small that he found more people in his dorm at Brigham Young University than there were in his whole hometown. He received his bachelor's degree from BYU and then joined the LDS Church Archives, where he worked for fifteen years, while also completing the course work for a master's degree. He took a year's leave to organize national archives for the Cherokee Nation. For the last fourteen years he has worked for the Utah State Archives, the last ten as director. He has published articles in Sunstone and Dialogue: Journal of Mormon Thought, also serving on the executive committee for the latter. His interest in religious history and particularly in people who have been involved in religious movements in Utah led him to Kitty Kimball.

On 17 July 1891, at the downtown Salt Lake City lodgings of Mary Ann Bagley, a group of eleven people met to organize a “more systematic work as Christian Scientists” in Utah.¹ These eleven individuals, eight women and three men, became the driving force behind the activities of the Utah Christian Science movement during its decade of energetic growth just before the turn of the century. Ten years later they would have converted several hundred Utahns and built, paid for, and dedicated one of the most beautiful churches in the state.

The Christian Science movement began twenty-five years earlier in Lynn, Massachusetts, in February 1866, when Mary Baker Patterson

(later Eddy) slipped on some ice and hurt her back. When it healed three days later following her reading of the story of Christ's healing a man with palsy (Matthew 9), she became convinced that the Bible contains the key to healing powers. In the next few years she wrote *Science and Health*, opened her "Christian Scientists' Home," and held the first public service of the group on 6 June 1875. She then opened the Massachusetts Metaphysical College to teach Christian Science to missionaries, who helped spread the doctrine worldwide. By 1890 she had trained over 730 practitioners, who would devote their full time to the healing ministry of Christian Science.²

A year later, Christian Science followers in Salt Lake were meeting to organize their activities. Mary Ann Bagley, the hostess of that meeting, had graduated from Mrs. Eddy's Metaphysical College. She then came to Utah from Montrose, Colorado, as a Christian Science practitioner.

Most of those attending that first Salt Lake meeting were, like Mrs. Bagley, recent arrivals in Utah; but two of the women had strong ties to the local culture. Thirty-seven-year-old Henrietta Young and thirty-five-year-old Lucretia Heywood Kimball were descendants of prominent Mormon families who had helped settle the Intermountain West. Most Utahns even today would associate the names Kimball and Young with the Mormon Church rather than with Christian Science.

Lucretia Heywood Kimball, known as Kittie, was born in Salt Lake City on 16 June 1856, the daughter of Sarepta Marie Blodgett and Joseph Leland Heywood. Joseph had joined the Mormon Church in Nauvoo, Illinois, in 1842, influenced by the church's founder, Joseph Smith. He was baptized in the Mississippi River by Mormon apostle Orson Hyde. When the Mormons left Illinois, Heywood was appointed a trustee to sell church property. He subsequently served in various civil and ecclesiastical positions, including bishop of the Salt Lake Seventeenth Ward, postmaster of Salt Lake City, and federal marshal, being appointed by both Presidents Fillmore and Pierce.³

As a Mormon polygamist, he had four wives. His first wife, Lucretia's mother, was a gracious hostess in Salt Lake City. The Heywood home on north Main Street in Salt Lake City was elegant for pioneer Utah and, according to Mormon apostle Orson F. Whitney, was "a most popular rendezvous to the young people of those times."⁴ It became one of the meeting places for the fashionable Wasatch Literary Association, a society organized by young adults in Salt Lake City.

Kittie, one of the most prominent members, gave dramatic readings, starred in plays, and sang.⁵

Also a member of the Wasatch Literary Association was Kittie's future husband, Frank D. Kimball, son of Sarah Melissa Granger Kimball, one of the originators of the Mormon Church's women's organization, the Relief Society.⁶ Despite his family's prominence in Mormonism and his friendship and longtime business partnership with Heber J. Grant, who became president of the Mormon Church, Frank was alienated from the Mormon Church in his youth. Frank married Kittie on 19 December 1882, and they eventually had three children.⁷ In October 1889, she went to Boston and attended a primary class in Christian Science taught by General Erastus N. Bates at the Massachusetts Metaphysical College.⁸

Another associate from the Wasatch Literary days was Bicknell Young. Bicknell, after spending several years in Europe, had developed poor health.⁹ Kittie suggested he go to a Christian Science practitioner. Bicknell's brother, Mormon general authority Seymour B. Young, credits Kittie with his family's conversion to Christian Science. In his diary, he bitterly observes:

There has been for several years growing up in our midst a silly system of faith designated Christian Science introduced into Utah by the right reverend Mrs. D. B. G. Eddie [*sic*] who claims that she has founded the only true system of religion and that it is a [unclear] of her own production which I am ready to admit for I am truly aware that God never had anything to do with it. Mrs. Kilt [*sic*] Haywood [*sic*] Kimball became one of her leading disciples and she also converted my mother and all my sisters and B. B. Young our youngest brother.¹⁰

Seymour B. Young's father, Joseph Young, was the older brother of Mormon Church president Brigham Young and had also served most of his adult life as one of the church's general authorities. Until his death in 1881, he presided over the ecclesiastical activities of the seventies priesthood quorums.¹¹ Seymour Bicknell Young replaced his father as a general authority¹² while another brother, LeGrande, also active in Mormon affairs, became legal counsel for his church.¹³

Even though Seymour's sister, Henrietta, was at the first meeting in 1891 and stayed very active in Christian Science work, she did not become an official member of the Salt Lake congregation until her eighty-one-year-old mother and four sisters joined in October 1895.¹⁴ Later, Henrietta's brother-in-law, Thomas John Mackintosh, also joined. Her younger brother, Brigham Bicknell Young, was already active in the Christian Science Church in Chicago where he and his wife, Eliza, performed and taught music with considerable local success. He was soon made soloist in the Chicago congregation and in 1898 was made first reader of the Second Church of Christ, Scientists. Eventually he was working full time for the Christian Science Board of Lectureship, completing the first world tour by a Christian Science lecturer in 1907. In 1910 he began teaching the Normal Class—the class which prepared Christian Science teachers. The highlight of his career came in 1917 when he was elected first reader for the Mother Church in Boston, placing him among the most important leaders in the history of Christian Science.¹⁵

The local Christian Science records also note Kittie's prominence in the development of the movement in Salt Lake City. She was elected to the first board of directors in 1891 and reelected the next year.¹⁶ One of the issues brought before that board was a resolution that "all applicants for membership in the Church of Christ Scientist should first withdraw from all other associations."¹⁷ Even though Kittie voted with the majority to reject the resolution, she wrote to her Mormon bishop, asking that she and three others be taken off the church rolls: "If on account of our names being on the Church books we are now considered members of the Church, we feel that it is honest and best to ask you to take our names from the books as it is our desire to be united with the Christian Science Church."¹⁸

In 1893 Kittie was asked to be in charge of the Salt Lake City Reading Room. She also traveled to Boston again to study, and there she received her bachelor's degree of Christian Science from the Massachusetts Metaphysical College. Entrance requirements included previous education and three successful years of practicing Christian Science.¹⁹ She joined the Mother Church, the First Church of Christ, Scientist, in Boston on 6 April 1895.

Kittie returned to Salt Lake City in 1896, was elected as second reader in the Salt Lake church, and started working as a Christian

Science practitioner.²⁰ A year later she again traveled to Boston. Her mother-in-law wrote: "Lucretia returned on Wednesday from Boston and Chicago where she has been the past month in the interest of her Science Church work. She did not see Mrs. Eddie but attended the Mother Church in B. which is to them equivalent to our Temple. She looks well and seems much pleased with the result of her visit. Next year they will build a Church here."²¹

The energies of the Salt Lake congregation had been directed to the building of that church since its first meeting in 1891. They obtained the services of important Utah architect Walter E. Ware, who designed a beautiful Richardsonian-Romanesque structure. The cornerstone was laid on 4 June 1898, and the dedicatory services were held on 27 November that same year for the finished structure, then completely free of debt—a remarkable evidence of the energy and commitment of the congregation.²²

The building had a seating capacity of 650, but the services were attended by over a thousand from Utah, Colorado, Nevada, Wyoming, and Idaho. The aisles of the lower floor and balcony were filled with chairs, and people stood in any available space. Kittie opened the services and acted as first reader, in the absence of Lewis B. Coates, who was in the East. C. F. Stayner then acted as second reader in her place.²³ During the service, Kittie summarized her testimony: "Whole nations have risen or fallen through their misconceptions of Deity. Let us rise to the true understanding of God, as revealed in Christian Science—Infinite Life, Truth and Love—and man as His image and likeness . . . the appearance of beautiful churches all over our land testify that prejudice and intolerance has given way to investigation and acceptance."²⁴

In August 1899, an advertisement appeared in the *Christian Science Journal*, the official organ of the Christian Science Church, which listed Mrs. Lucretia H. Kimball, C. S. B., principal of the Salt Lake Academy of Christian Science, with two classes to be taught each year. At some point she was given private instruction in Chicago from Edward A. Kimball, one of Mrs. Eddy's students and the Normal Class teacher in the Board of Education, which had been established in 1898 by Mrs. Eddy to prepare certified teachers of Christian Science. On 27 February 1920, Brigham Bicknell Young notified the Mother Church of her passing on 22 February in Boston.²⁵ She had been visiting with her daughter. Her obituary recognized that "it is said to have been

largely through her efforts that the Church has grown to its present proportions in Salt Lake.”²⁶

It is appropriate that a religious system founded by a woman had a woman as its chief supporter in Salt Lake City. The movement’s flourishing in Utah may have been encouraged by Mrs. Eddy’s advocacy of equality between men and women: “Civil law establishes very unfair differences between the rights of the two sexes. Christian Science furnishes no precedent for such injustice, and civilization mitigates it in some measure. Still, it is a marvel why usage should accord women less rights than does either Christian Science or civilization.”²⁷

A Mormon pioneer family, responsible in part for the successful founding of Mormonism, produced in the second generation an additional religious pioneer, Lucretia Heywood Kimball, who helped build a strong foundation for Christian Science work in Utah.