

Son of Man,” will appear. Acting for PRIESTHOOD leaders in all DISPENSATIONS, Adam will return to the risen Jesus the priesthood KEYS which represent everlasting dominion.

The prophecy of the “seventy weeks” in chapter nine interests Latter-day Saints because it suggests that the New Testament church would fall into apostasy. The sixty-nine weeks (Dan. 9:24–26) may be symbolic of the period between the Jews’ return to Jerusalem (537 B.C.) and the coming of Jesus the MESSIAH, who would atone (“be cut off”) for his people. Verse 27 reports that the Lord would “confirm the covenant with many for one week.” This seventieth week may typify the decades that Christ’s true church endured, led then by living apostles and prophets, ending shortly after A.D. 100, following the ministry of John the Apostle. The prophecy also notes that Jerusalem and its temple would be destroyed “in the midst of the week” (A.D. 70), mentioning the abomination of desolation and the cessation of temple SACRIFICE (cf. Mark 13:14).

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## DANITES

Following the violence in northwestern Missouri in 1838, the Mormon dissident Sampson Avard, star witness in a court of inquiry weighing evidence against LDS leaders, charged that the Church had organized a band of armed men bound by secret oaths who had engaged in illegal activities against non-Mormon neighbors (*Document*, pp. 97–108). With the 1841 publication of the court proceedings, Avard’s account became the foundation for all subsequent non-Mormon “Danite” accounts. Thus was born the legend of the Danites.

Though no Danite organization was known in Nauvoo or in Utah, the stereotype persisted, be-

coming a part of national discussion about Utah and the Latter-day Saints and for decades a staple of dime novels (see MORMONS, IMAGE OF: IN FICTION). By 1900 at least fifty novels had been published in English using the Avard-type Danite to develop story lines of murder, pillage, and conspiracy against common citizens. Arthur Conan Doyle (*A Study in Scarlet*) created Sherlock Holmes to solve a murder committed by Danites. Zane Grey (*Riders of the Purple Sage*) and Robert Louis Stevenson (*The Dynamiter*) were among the authors who found the image of the evil Danites well suited for popular reading audiences who delighted in sensationalism (Cornwall and Arrington). The image became so pervasive that few readers were willing to question the accuracy of such portrayals.

The reality of Danites in Missouri in 1838 is both less and more than the stereotype. Contemporary records suggest something fundamentally different. In October 1838, Albert Perry Rockwood, an LDS resident of Far West, Missouri, wrote in his journal of a *public* Danite organization that involved the whole Latter-day Saint community. He described in biblical terms companies of tens, fifties, and hundreds (cf. Ex. 18:13–26)—similar to the organization the pioneers later used during the migration to the Great Basin. Here the Danite organization encompassed the full range of activities of a covenant community that viewed itself as a restoration of ancient Israel. Working in groups, with some assigned to defense, others to securing provisions, and still others to constructing dwellings, these Danites served the interests of the whole. This was not the secret organization Avard spoke of; in fact, Rockwood’s letters to friends and family were even more descriptive than his journal (Jessee and Whittaker).

In the fall of 1838, with old settlers in Missouri swearing to drive the Mormons out rather than permit them to become a political majority and with LDS leaders declaring that they would fight before again seeing their rights trampled, northwestern Missouri was in a state of war (see MISSOURI CONFLICT). Sparked by an effort to prevent LDS voting, violence erupted in August and soon spread. On both sides, skirmishes involved members of state-authorized militias. Evidence suggests that during this time of fear, clashes, and confusion, Sampson Avard, probably a captain within the public Danite structure and a militia officer, subverted the ideals of both by persuading

his men to undertake the criminal activities he later argued were the authorized actions of the whole community. Encouraged perhaps by the firmly stated intentions of leaders to meet force with force but apparently without their approval, Avard used his Danite and military positions to mold a covert renegade band to avenge anti-Mormon outrages. He succeeded because after weeks of responding to violence with strictly defensive measures, Avard was not alone in feeling that the time for forbearance had passed. Others of the time in late reminiscences recalled that clandestine meetings were held, which were subsequently reported to Joseph SMITH, who then denounced Avard, removed him from his official command, and disbanded the maverick body. Though short-lived and unauthorized, this covert organization, thanks to Avard's distorted and widely publicized testimony, usurped the former usage of "Danites," and the once honorable appellation became a synonym for officially sanctioned secret lawlessness.

In contrast, when five hundred men in the Caldwell County (Mormon) militia later took the offensive in response to two months of unrelenting violence and depredations, there was nothing secretive about it. In mid-October, with supplies running low, they left defensive positions to forage and to punish enemies—a very public effort to improve security by preemptive forays. Two weeks later, facing increasing numbers of volunteers and a militia emboldened by the governor's EXTERMINATION ORDER, they surrendered their arms in defeat.

The reality, then, behind the supposed secretive, lawless Danites of legend was this renegade band formed briefly in 1838 in the midst of war. There is no evidence of any such band later, and even in 1838, the Latter-day Saint community as a whole did not deserve blame for the unauthorized actions of a few. As Parley P. Pratt, an apostle, wrote to his family after hearing Avard's court testimony, "They accuse us of things that never entered into our hearts." From LIBERTY JAIL on December 16, 1838, Joseph Smith summarized the situation as he then understood it: "We have learned also since we have been in prison that many false and pernicious things which were calculated to lead the saints far astray and to do great injury have been taught by Dr. Avard as coming from the Presidency . . . which the presidency never knew of being taught in the church by any

body until after they were made prisoners . . . the presidency were ignorant as well as innocent of these things" (*PWJS*, p. 380).

Unfortunately, in an age when Latter-day Saints were hated and persecuted, Avard's story provided a ready explanation for anyone who wanted to believe the worst. The reality was far less sensational.

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## DATING AND COURTSHIP

Members of the Church are somewhat distinctive in their dating and courtship practices, but they are also influenced by broader cultural patterns. In some cultures, parents still closely supervise courtship and arrange children's marriages, but youth worldwide have increasing choices in dating and mate selection. For most young people in the United States outside the Church, dating begins at an early age (about age thirteen during the 1980s); it has no set pattern of progression, and is often informal and unsupervised. These contemporary dating patterns form a social context that influences somewhat the majority of LDS youth.

However, although courtship patterns change and vary across cultures, there is quite a conservative pattern for dating and courtship among Latter-day Saints in Western nations. It is expected that LDS youth will not begin dating until the age of sixteen. Serious, steady dating and marriage-oriented courtship are expected to be delayed longer, perhaps until after a MISSION for males and