

[MORMON STUDIES](#) PRESENTS:

THE STORY OF THE MORMONS

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THE STORY OF THE MORMONS

BOOK I

THE MORMON ORIGIN

CHAPTER I

FACILITY OF HUMAN BELIEF

SUMMING up his observations of the Mormons as he found them in Utah while secretary of the territory, five years after their removal to the Great Salt Lake valley, B. G. Ferris wrote, "The real miracle {of their success} consists in so large a body of men and women, in a civilized land, and in the nineteenth century, being brought under, governed, and controlled by such gross religious imposture." This statement presents, in concise form, the general view of the surprising features of the success of the Mormon leaders, in forming, augmenting, and keeping together their flock; but it is a mistaken view. To accept it would be to concede that, in a highly civilized nation like ours, and in so late a century, the acceptance of religious beliefs which, to the non-believers, seem gross superstitions, is so unusual that it may be classed with the miraculous. Investigation easily disproves this.

It is true that the effrontery which has characterized Mormonism from the start has been most daring. Its founder a lad of low birth, very limited education, and uncertain morals; its beginnings so near burlesque that they drew down upon its originators the scoff of their neighbors, -- the organization increased its membership as it was driven from one state to another, building up at last in an untried wilderness a population that has steadily augmented its wealth and numbers; doggedly defending its right to practise its peculiar beliefs and obey only the officers of the church, even when its course in this respect has brought it in conflict

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with the government of the United States. Professing only a desire to be let alone, it promulgated in polygamy a doctrine that was in conflict with the moral sentiment of the Christian world, making its practice not only a privilege, but a part of the religious duty of its members. When, in recent years, Congress legislated against this practice, the

church fought for its peculiar institution to the last, its leading members accepting exile and imprisonment; and only the certainty of continued exclusion from the rights of citizenship, and the hopelessness of securing the long-desired prize of statehood for Utah, finally induced the church to bow to the inevitable, and to announce a form of release for its members from the *duty* of marrying more wives than one. Aside from this concession, the Mormon church is to-day as autocratic in its hold on its members, as aggressive in its proselyting, and as earnest in maintaining its individual religious and political power, as it has been in any previous time in its history.

In its material aspects we must concede to the Mormon church organization a remarkable success; to Joseph Smith, Jr., a leadership which would brook no rival; to Brigham Young the maintenance of an autocratic authority which enabled him to hold together and enlarge his church far beyond the limits that would have been deemed possible when they set out across the plains with all their possessions in their wagons. But it is no more surprising that the Mormons succeeded in establishing their church in the United States than it would have been if they had been equally successful in South America; no more surprising that this success should have been won in the nineteenth century than it would have been to record it in the twelfth. In studying questions of this kind, we are, in the first place, entirely too apt to ignore the fact that man, while comparatively a "superior being," is in simple fact one species of the animals that are found upon the earth; and that, as a species, he has traits which distinguish him characteristically just as certain well-known traits characterize those animals that we designate as "lower." If a traveller from the Sun should print his observations of the inhabitants of the different planets, he would have to say of those of the Earth something like this: "One of Man's leading traits is what is known as belief. He is a credulous creature, and is especially susceptible to appeals to his credulity in regard to

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matters affecting his existence after death." Whatever explanation we may accept of the origin of the conception by this animal of his soul-existence, and of the evolution of shadowy beliefs into religious

systems, we must concede that Man is possessed of a tendency to worship something, -- a recognition, at least, of a higher power with which it behooves him to be on friendly terms, -- and so long as the absolute correctness of any one belief or doctrine cannot be actually proved to him, he is constantly ready to inquire into, and perhaps give credence to, new doctrines that are presented for his consideration. The acceptance by Man of novelties in the way of religions is a characteristic that has marked his species ever since its record has been preserved. According to Max Matter, "every religion began simply as a matter of reason, and from this drifted into a superstition;" that is, into what non-believers in the new doctrine characterize as a superstition. Whenever one of these driftings has found a lodgement, there has been planted a new sect. There has never been a year in the Christian era when there have not been believers ready to accept any doctrine offered to them in the name of religion. As Shakespeare expresses it, in the words of *Bassanio*: --

"In religion,
What damned error but some sober brow
Will bless it, and approve it with a text,
Hiding the grossness with fair ornament?"

In glancing at the cause of this unchanged susceptibility to religious credulity -- unchanged while the world has been making such strides in the acquisition of exact information -- we may find a summing up of the situation in Macaulay's blunt declaration that "natural theology is not a progressive science; a Christian of the fifth century with a Bible is on a par with a Christian of the nineteenth century with a Bible. The "orthodox" believer in that Bible can only seek a better understanding of it by studying it himself and accepting the deductions of other students. Nothing, as the centuries have passed, has been added to his definite knowledge of his God or his own future existence. When, therefore, some one, like a Swedenborg or a Joseph Smith, appears with an announcement of an addition to the information on this subject, obtained by direct revelation from on high, he supplies one of the greatest desiderata that man is conscious of, and we ought, perhaps,

to wonder that his followers are not so numerous, but so few. Progress in medical science would no longer permit any body like the College of the Physicians of London to recognize curative value in the skull of a person who had met with a violent death, as it did in the seventeenth century; but the physician of the seventeenth century with a pharmacopoeia was not "on a par with" a physician of the nineteenth century with a pharmacopoeia.

Nor has man changed in his mental susceptibilities as the centuries have advanced. It is a failure to recognize this fact which leads observers like Ferris to find it so marvellous that a belief like Mormonism should succeed in the nineteenth century. Draper's studies of man's intellectual development led him to declare that "man has ever been the same in his modes of thought and motives of action, "and to assert his purpose to" judge past occurrences in the same way as those of our own time."¹ So Macaulay refused to accept the doctrine that "the world is constantly becoming more and more enlightened, "asserting that "the human mind, instead of marching, merely marks time. "Nothing offers stronger confirmation of the correctness of these views than the history of religious beliefs, and the teachings connected therewith since the death of Christ.

The chain of these beliefs and teachings -- including in the list only those which offer the boldest challenge to a sane man's credulity -- is uninterrupted down to our own day. A few of them may be mentioned by way of illustration. In one century we find Spanish priests demanding the suppression of the opera on the ground that this form of entertainment caused a drought, and a Pope issuing a bull against men and women having sexual intercourse with fiends. In another, we find an English tailor, unsuccessfully, allotting endless torments to all who would not accept his declaration that God was only six feet in height, at the same time that George Fox, who was successful in establishing the Quaker sect, denounced as unchristian adoration of Janus and Woden, any mention of a month as January or a day as Wednesday. Luther, the Protestant pioneer, believed that he had personal conferences with the devil; Wesley, the founder of Methodism, declared that "the giving up of {belief} in witchcraft is, in effect, giving up the Bible. "Education and mental training have had no influence in

¹ "Intellectual Development of Europe," Vol. II, Chap. 3.

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shaping the declarations of the leaders of new religious sects.¹ The learned scientist, Swedenborg, told of seeing the Virgin Mary dressed in blue satin, and of spirits wearing hats, just as confidently as the ignorant Joseph Smith, Jr., described his angel as "a tall, slim, well-built, handsome man, with a bright pillar upon his head."

The readiness with which even believers so strictly taught as are the Jews can be led astray by the announcement of a new teacher divinely inspired, is illustrated in the stories of their many false Messiahs. One illustration of this -- from the pen of Zangwill -- may be given: --

"From all the lands of the Exile, crowds of the devout came to do him homage and tender allegiance -- Turkish Jews with red fez or saffron-yellow turban; Jerusalem Jews in striped cotton gowns and soft felt hats; Polish Jews with fox-skin caps and long caftans; sallow German Jews, gigantic Russian Jews, highbred Spanish Jews; and with them often their wives and daughters -- Jerusalem Jewesses with blue shirts and head-veils, Egyptian Jewesses with sweeping robes and black head-shawls, Jewesses from Ashdod and Gaza, with white visors fringed with gold coins; Polish Jewesses with glossy wigs; Syrian Jewesses with eyelashes black as though lined with kohl; fat Jewesses from Tunis, with clinging breeches interwoven with gold and silver."

This homage to a man who turned Turk, and became a doorkeeper of the Sultan, to save himself from torture and death!

Savagery and civilization meet on this plane of religious credulity. The Indians of Canada believed not more implicitly in the demons who howled all over the Isles of Demons, than did the early French sailors and the priests whose protection the latter asked. The Jesuit priests of the seventeenth century accepted, and impressed upon their white followers in New France, belief in miracles which made a greater demand on credulity than did any of the exactions of the Indian medicine man. That the head of a white man, which the Iroquois carried to their village, spoke to them and scolded them for their perfidy, "found believers among the most intelligent men of the colony, "just as did the story of the conversion of a sick Huguenot immigrant, with whose gruel a Mother secretly mixed a little of the

powdered bone of a Jesuit martyr.² And French Canada is to-day as "orthodox" in its belief

¹ "The splendid gifts which make a seer are usually found among those whom society calls 'common or unclean.' These brutish beings are the chosen vessels in whom God has poured the elixirs which amaze humanity. Such beings have furnished the prophets, the St. Peters, the hermits of history." BALZAC, in "Cousin Pons."

² Parkman's "Old Regime in Canada."

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in miracles as was the Canada of the seventeenth century. The church of St. Anne de Beaupre, below Quebec, attracts thousands annually, and is piled with the crutches which the miraculously cured have cast aside. Masses were said in 1899 in the church of Notre Dame de Bonsecours at Montreal, at the expense of a pilots' association, to ward off wrecks in the treacherous St. Lawrence; and in the near-by provinces there were religious processions to check the attacks of caterpillars in the orchards.

Nor need we go to Catholic Quebec for modern illustrations of this kind of faith. "Bareheaded people stood out upon the corner in East 113th Street yesterday afternoon," said a New York City newspaper of December 18, 1898, "because they were unable to get into the church of Our Lady Queen of Angels, where a relic of St. Anthony of Padua was exposed for veneration." Describing a service in the church of St. Jean Baptiste in East 77th Street, New York, where a relic alleged to be a piece of a bone of the mother of the Virgin was exposed, a newspaper of that city, on July 24th, 1901, said: "There were five hundred persons, by actual count, in and around the crypt chapel of St. Anne when afternoon service stopped the rush of the sick and crippled at 4.30 o'clock yesterday. There were many more at the 8 o'clock evening Mass. What did these people seek at the shrine? Only the favor of St. Anne and a kiss and touch of the casket that, by church authority, contains bone of her body." France has to-day its Grotto of Lourdes, Wales its St. Winefride's Well, Mexico its "wonder-working doll" that makes the sick well and the childless mothers, and Moscow its "wonder-working picture of the Mother of God," before which the

Czar prostrates himself.

Not in recent years has the appetite for some novelty on which to fasten belief been more manifest in the United States than it was at the close of the nineteenth century. Old beliefs found new teachers, and promulgators of new ideas found followers. Instructors in Brahminism attracted considerable attention. A "Chapter of the College of Divine Sciences and Realization" instituted a revival of Druid sun-adoration on the shores of Lake Michigan. An organization has been formed of believers in the One-Over-At-Acre, a Persian who claimed to be the forerunner of the Millennium, and in whom, as Christ, it is said that more than three thousand persons

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in this country believe. We have among us also Jaorelites, who believe in the near date of the end of the world, and that they must make their ascent to heaven from a mountain in Scotland. The hold which the form of belief called Christian Science has obtained upon people of education and culture needs only be referred to. Along with this have come the "divine healers," gaining patients in circles where it would be thought impossible for them to obtain even consideration, and one of them securing a clientage in a Western city which has enabled him to establish there a church of his own.

In fact, instead of finding in enlightened countries like the United States and England a poor field for the dissemination of new beliefs, the whole school of revealers find there their best opportunities. Discussing this susceptibility, Aliene Gorren, in her "Anglo-Saxons and Others," reaches this conclusion: --

"Nowhere are so many persons of sound intelligence in all practical affairs so easily led to follow after crazy seers and seeresses as in England and the United States. The truth is that the mind of man refuses to be shut out absolutely from the world of the higher abstractions, and that, if it may not make its way thither under proper guidance, it will set off even at the tail of the first ragged street procession that passes."

The "real miracle" in Mormonism, then, -- the wonderful feature of its success, -- is to be sought, not in the fact that it has been able to attract

believers in a new prophet, and to find them at this date and in this country, but in its success in establishing and keeping together in a republic like ours a membership who acknowledge its supreme authority in politics as well as in religion, and who form a distinct organization which does not conceal its purpose to rule over the whole nation. Had Mormonism confined itself to its religious teachings, and been preached only to those who sought its instruction, instead of beating up the world for recruits and conveying them to its home, the Mormon church would probably to-day be attracting as little attention as do the Harmonists of Pennsylvania.

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CHAPTER II

THE SMITH FAMILY

Among the families who settled in Ontario County, New York, in 1816, was that of one Joseph Smith. It consisted of himself, his wife, and nine children. The fourth of these children, Joseph Smith, Jr., became the Mormon prophet.

The Smiths are said to have been of Scotch ancestry. It was the mother, however, who exercised the larger influence on her son's life, and she has left very minute details of her own and her father's family.¹ Her father, Solomon Mack, was a native of Lyme, Connecticut. The daughter Lucy, who became Mrs. Joseph Smith, Sr., was born in Gilsum, Cheshire County, New Hampshire, on July 8, 1776. Mr. Mack was remembered as a feeble old man, who rode around the country on horseback, using a woman's saddle, and selling his own autobiography. The "tramp" of those early days often offered an autobiography, or what passed for one, and, as books were then rare, if he could say that it contained an account of actual adventures in the recent wars, he was certain to find purchasers.

One of the few copies of this book in existence lies before me. It was printed at the author's expense about the year 1810. It is wholly without interest as a narrative, telling of the poverty of his parents, how he was bound, when four years old, to a farmer who gave him no education and worked him like a slave; gives some of his experiences in the campaigns against the French and Indians in northern New York and in the war of the Revolution, when he was in turn teamster, sutler, and privateer; describes with minute detail many ordinary illnesses and accidents that befell him; and closes with a recital of his religious awakening, which was deferred until his seventy-sixth year, while he was suffering

¹ "Biographical Sketches of Joseph Smith and his Progenitors for Many Generations," Lucy Smith.

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with rheumatism. At that time it seemed to him that he several times "saw a bright light in a dark night," and though he heard a voice calling to him. Twenty-two of the forty-eight duodecimo pages that the book contains are devoted to hymns "composed," the title-page says, "on the death of several of his relatives," not all by himself. One of these may be quoted entire: --

"My friends, I am on the ocean,
So sweetly do I sail;
Jesus is my portion,
He's given me a pleasant gale."

The bruises sore,
In harbor soon I'll be,
And see my redeemer there
That died for you and me."

Mrs. Smith's family seem to have had a natural tendency to belief in revelations. Her eldest brother, Jason, became a "Seeker;" the "Seekers" of that day believed that the devout of their times could, through prayer and faith, secure the "gifts" of the Gospel which were granted to the ancient apostles.¹ He was one of the early believers in

faith-cure, and was, we are told, himself cured by that means in 1835. One of Lucy's sisters had a miraculous recovery from illness. After being an invalid for two years she was "borne away to the world of spirits, "where she saw the Saviour and received a message from Him for her earthly friends.

Lucy herself came very exactly under the description given by Ruth McEnery Stuart of one of her negro characters: "Duke's mother was of the slighter intelligences, and hence much given to convictions. Knowing few things, she 'believed in' a great many." Lucy Smith had neither education nor natural intelligence that would interfere with such "beliefs" as came to her from family tradition, from her own literal interpretations of the Bible, or from the workings of her imagination. She tells us that after her marriage, when very ill, she made a covenant with God that she would serve him if her recovery was granted; thereupon she heard a voice giving her assurance that her prayer would be answered, and she was better the next morning. Later, when

¹ A sect called "Seekers," who arose in 1645, taught, like the Mormons, that the Scriptures are defective, the true church lost, and miracles necessary to faith.

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anxious for the safety of her husband's soul, she prayed in a grove (most of the early Mormons' prayers were made in the woods), and saw a vision indicating his coming conversion; later still, in Vermont, a daughter was restored to health by her parent's prayers.

According to Mrs. Smith's account of their life in Vermont, they were married on January 24, 1796, at Tunbridge, but soon moved to Randolph, where Smith was engaged in "merchandise, "keeping a store. Learning of the demand for crystallized ginseng in China, he invested money in that product and made a shipment, but it proved unprofitable, and, having in this way lost most of his money, they moved back to a farm at Tunbridge. Thence they moved to Royalton, and in a few months to Sharon, where, on December 23, 1805, Joseph Smith, Jr., their fourth child, was born.¹ Again they moved to Tunbridge, and then back to Royalton (all these places in Vermont).

From there they went to Lebanon, New Hampshire, thence to Norwich, Vermont, still "farming" without success, until, after three years of crop failure, they decided to move to New York State, arriving there in the summer of 1816.

Less prejudiced testimony gives an even less favorable view than this of the elder Smith's business career in Vermont. Judge Daniel Woodward, of the county court of Windsor, Vermont, near whose father's farm the Smiths lived, says that the elder Smith while living there was a hunter for Captain Kidd's treasure, and that "he also became implicated with one Jack Downing in counterfeiting money, but turned state's evidence and escaped the penalty."² He had in earlier life been a Universalist, but afterward became a Methodist. His spiritual welfare gave his wife much concern, but although he had "two visions" while living in Vermont, she did not accept his change of heart. She admits, however, that after their removal to New York her husband obeyed the scriptural injunction, "your old men shall dream dreams," and she mentions several of these dreams, the latest in 1819, giving the particulars of some of them. One sample of these will suffice. The dreamer found himself in a beautiful garden, with wide walks and a main walk running through the centre." On each side of

¹ There is equally good authority for placing the house in which Smith was born across the line in Royalton.

² *Historical Magazine*, 1870.

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this was a richly carved seat, and on each seat were placed six wooden images, each of which was the size of a very large man. When I came to the first image on the right side it arose, bowed to me with much deference. I then turned to the one which sat opposite to me, on the left side, and it arose and bowed to me in the same manner as the first. I continued turning first to the right and then to the left until the whole twelve had made the obeisance, after which I was entirely healed {of a lameness from which he then was suffering}. I then asked my guide the meaning of all this, but I awoke before I received an answer."

A similar wakefulness always manifested itself at the critical moment

in these dreams. What the world lost by this insomnia of the dreamer the world will never know.

The Smiths' first residence in New York State was in the village of Palmyra. There the father displayed a sign, "Cake and Beer Shop, "selling" gingerbread, pies, boiled eggs, root beer, and other like notions, "and he and his sons did odd jobs, gardening, harvesting, and well-digging, when they could get them.¹

They were very poor, and Mrs. Smith added to their income by painting oil-cloth table covers. After a residence of three years and a half in Palmyra, the family took possession of a piece of land two miles south of that place, on the border of Manchester. They had no title to it, but as the owners were non-resident minors they were not disturbed. There they put up a little log house, with two rooms on the ground floor and two in the attic, which sheltered them all. Later, the elder Smith contracted to buy the property and erected a farmhouse on it; but he never completed his title to it.

While classing themselves as farmers, the Smiths were regarded by their neighbors as shiftless and untrustworthy. They sold cordwood, vegetables, brooms of their own manufacture, and maple sugar, continuing to vend cakes in the village when any special occasion attracted a crowd. It may be remarked here that, while Ontario County, New York, was regarded as "out West" by sea-board and New England people in 1830, its population was then almost as large as it is to-day (having 40,288 inhabitants according to the census of 1830 and 48,453 according to the census of 1890). The father and several of the boys could not read, and a good

¹ Tucker's "Origin, Rise, and Progress of Mormonism," p. 12.

deal of the time of the younger sons was spent in hunting, fishing, and lounging around the village.

The son Joseph did not rise above the social standing of his brothers. The best that a Mormon biographer, Orson Pratt, could say of him as a

youth was that "He could read without much difficulty, and write a very imperfect hand, and had a very limited understanding of the elementary rules of arithmetic. These were his highest and only attainments, while the rest of those branches so universally taught in the common schools throughout the United States were entirely unknown to him."¹ He was "Joe Smith" to every one. Among the younger people he served as a butt for jokes, and we are told that the boys who bought the cakes that he peddled used to pay him in pewter two shilling pieces, and that when he called at the *Palmyra Register* office for his father's weekly paper, the youngsters in the press room thought it fun to blacken his face with the ink balls.

Here are two pictures of the young man drawn by persons who saw him constantly in the days of his vagabondage. The first is from Mr. Tucker's book: --

"At this period in the life and career of Joseph Smith, Jr., or 'Joe Smith,' as he was universally named, and the Smith family, they were popularly regarded as an illiterate, whiskey-drinking, shiftless, irreligious race of people -- the first named, the chief subject of this biography, being unanimously voted the laziest and most worthless of the generation. From the age of twelve to twenty years he is distinctly remembered as a dull-eyed, flaxen-haired, prevaricating boy noted only for his indolent and vagabondish character, and his habits of exaggeration and untruthfulness. Taciturnity was among his characteristic idiosyncrasies, and he seldom spoke to any one outside of his intimate associates, except when first addressed by another; and then, by reason of his extravagancies of statement, his word was received with the least confidence by those who knew him best. He could utter the most palpable exaggeration or marvellous absurdity with the utmost apparent gravity. He nevertheless evidenced the rapid development of a thinking, plodding, evil-brewing mental composition -- largely given to inventions of low cunning, schemes of mischief and deception, and false and mysterious pretensions. In his moral phrenology the professor might have marked the organ of secretiveness as very large, and that of conscientiousness omitted. He was, however, proverbially good natured, very rarely, if ever, indulging in any combative spirit toward any one, whatever might be the provocation, and yet was never known to laugh. Albeit, he seemed to be the pride of his indulgent father, who has been heard to boast of him as the '*genus* of the family,' quoting his own expression."²

¹ "Remarkable Visions."

² "Origin, Rise, and Progress of Mormonism," p. 16.

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The second (drawn a little later) is by Daniel Hendrix, a resident of Palmyra, New York, at the time of which he speaks, and an assistant in setting the type and reading the proof of the Mormon Bible: --

"Every one knew him as Joe Smith. He had lived in Palmyra a few years previous to my going there from Rochester. Joe was the most ragged, lazy fellow in the place, and that is saying a good deal. He was about twenty-five years old. I can see him now in my mind's eye, with his torn and patched trousers held to his form by a pair of suspenders made out of sheeting, with his calico shirt as dirty and black as the earth, and his uncombed hair sticking through the holes in his old battered hat. In winter I used to pity him, for his shoes were so old and worn out that he must have suffered in the snow and slush; yet Joe had a jovial, easy, don't-care way about him that made him a lot of warm friends. He was a good talker, and would have made a fine stump speaker if he had had the training. He was known among the young men I associated with as a romancer of the first water. I never knew so ignorant a man as Joe was to have such a fertile imagination. He never could tell a common occurrence in his daily life without embellishing the story with his imagination; yet I remember that he was grieved one day when old Parson Reed told Joe that he was going to hell for his lying habits."¹

To this testimony may be added the following declarations, published in 1833, the year in which a mob drove the Mormons out of Jackson County, Missouri. The first was signed by eleven of the most prominent citizens of Manchester, New York, and the second by sixty-two residents of Palmyra: --

"We, the undersigned, being personally acquainted with the family of Joseph Smith, Sr., with whom the Gold Bible, so called, originated, state: That they were not only a lazy, indolent set of men, but also intemperate, and their word was not to be depended upon; and that we are truly glad to dispense with their society."

"We, the undersigned, have been acquainted with the Smith family for a number of years, while they resided near this place, and we have no hesitation in saying that we consider them destitute of that moral character which ought to entitle them to the confidence of any community. They were particularly famous for visionary projects; spent much of their time in digging for money which they pretended was hid in the earth, and to this day large excavations may be seen in the earth, not far from their residence, where they used to spend their time in digging for hidden treasures. Joseph Smith, Sr., and his son Joseph were, in particular, considered entirely destitute of moral character, and addicted to vicious habits."²

¹ San Jacinto, California, letter of February 2, 1897, to the *St. Louis Globe-Democrat*.

² Howe's "Mormonism Unveiled," p. 261.

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Finally may be quoted the following affidavit of Parley Chase: --

"Manchester, New York, December 2, 1833. I was acquainted with the family of Joseph Smith, Sr., both before and since they became Mormons, and feel free to state that not one of the male members of the Smith family were entitled to any credit whatsoever. They were lazy, intemperate, and worthless men, very much addicted to lying. In this they frequently boasted their skill. Digging for money was their principal employment. In regard to their Gold Bible speculation, they scarcely ever told two stories alike. The Mormon Bible is said to be a revelation from God, through Joseph Smith, Jr., his Prophet, and this same Joseph Smith, Jr., to my knowledge, bore the reputation among his neighbors of being a liar."¹

¹ Howe's "Mormonism Unveiled," p. 248.

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CHAPTER III

HOW JOSEPH SMITH BECAME A MONEY-DIGGER

The elder Smith, as we have seen, was known as a money-digger while a resident of Vermont. Of course that subject as a matter of conversation in his family, and his sons were a character to share in his belief in the existence of hidden treasure. The territory around Palmyra was as good ground for their explorations as any in Vermont, and they

soon let their neighbors know of a possibility of riches that lay within their reach.

The father, while a resident of Vermont, also claimed ability to locate an underground stream of water over which would be a good site for a well, by means of a forked hazel switch,¹ and in this way doubtless increased the demand for his services as a well-digger, but we have no testimonials to his success. The son Joseph, while still a young lad, professed to have his father's gift in this respect, and he soon added to his accomplishments the power to locate hidden riches, and in this way began his career as a money-digger, which was so intimately connected with his professions as a prophet.

Writers on the origin of the Mormon Bible, and the gradual development of Smith the Prophet from Smith the village loafer and money-seeker, have left their readers unsatisfied on many points. Many of these obscurities will be removed by a very careful examination of Joseph's occupations and declarations during the years immediately preceding the announcement of the revelation and delivery to him of the golden plates.

¹ The so-called "divining rod" has received a good deal of attention from persons engaged in psychical research. Vol. XIII, Part II, of the "Proceedings of the Society Of Psychical Research" is devoted to a discussion of the subject by professor W. F. Barrett of the Royal College of Science for Ireland, in Dublin, and in March, 1890, a commission was appointed in France to study the matter.

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The deciding event in Joe's career was a trip to Susquehanna County, Pennsylvania, when he was a lad. It can be shown that it was there that he obtained an idea of vision-seeing nearly ten years before the date he gives in his autobiography as that of the delivery to him of the golden plates containing the Book of Mormon, and it was there probably that, in some way, he later formed the acquaintance of Sidney Rigdon. It can also be shown that the original version of his vision differed radically from the one presented, after the lapse of another ten years spent under Rigdon's tutelage, in his autobiography. Each of these points is of great incidental value in establishing Rigdon's connection

with the conception of a new Bible, and the manner of its presentation to the public. Later Mormon authorities have shown a dislike to concede that Joe was a money-digger, but the fact is admitted both in his mother's history of him and by himself. His own statement about it is as follows: --

"In the month of October, 1825, I hired with an old gentleman by the name of Josiah Stoyal, who lived in Chenango County, State of New York. He had heard something of a silver mine having been opened by the Spaniards in Harmony, Susquehanna County, State of Pennsylvania, and had, previous to my hiring with him, been digging in order, if possible, to discover the mine. After I went to live with him he took me, among the rest of his hands, to dig for the silver mine, at which I continued to work for nearly a month, without success in our undertaking, and finally I prevailed with the old gentleman to cease digging for it. Hence arose the very prevalent story of my having been a money-digger."¹

Mother Smith's account says, however, that Stoyal "came for Joseph on account of having heard that he possessed certain keys by which he could discern things invisible to the natural eye;" thus showing that he had a reputation as a "gazer" before that date. It was such discrepancies as these which led Brigham Young to endeavor to suppress the mother's narrative.

The "gazing" which Joe took up is one of the oldest -- perhaps the oldest -- form of alleged human divination, and has been called "mirror-gazing," "crystal-gazing," "crystal vision," and the like. Its practice dates back certainly three thousand years, having been noted in all ages, and among nations uncivilized as well as civilized. Some students of the subject connect with such

¹ *Millennial Star*, Vol. XIV, Supt., p. 6.

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divination Joseph's silver cup "whereby indeed he divineth"(Genesis xlv. 5). Others, long before the days of Smith and Rigdon, advanced the theory that the Urim and Thummim were clear crystals intended for "gazing" purposes. One writer remarks of the practice, "Aeschylus refers it to Prometheus, Cicero to the Assyrians and Etruscans, Zoroaster to Ahriman, Varro to the Persian Magi, and a very large

class of authors, from the Christian Fathers and Schoolmen downward, to the devil."¹ An act of James I (1736), against witchcraft in England, made it a crime to pretend to discover property "by any occult or crafty science. "As indicating the universal knowledge of "gazing," it may be further noted that Varro mentions its practice among the Romans and Pausanias among the Greeks. It was known to the ancient Peruvians. It is practised to-day by East Indians, Africans (including Egyptians), Maoris, Siberians, by Australian, Polynesian, and Zulu savages, by many of the tribes of American Indians, and by persons of the highest culture in Europe and America.² Andrew Lang's collection of testimony about visions seen in crystals by English women in 1897 might seem convincing to any one who has not had experience in weighing testimony in regard to spiritualistic manifestations, or brought this testimony alongside of that in behalf of the "occult phenomena" of Adept Brothers presented by Sinnett.³

"Gazers" use different methods. Some look into water contained in a vessel, some into a drop of blood, some into ink, some into a round opaque stone, some into mirrors, and many into some form of crystal or a glass ball. Indeed, the "gazer" seems to be quite independent as to the medium of his sight-seeing, so long as he has the "power." This "power" is put also to a great variety of uses. Australian savages depend on it to foretell the outcome of an attack on their enemies; Apaches resort to it to discover the whereabouts of things lost or stolen; and Malagasies, Zulus, and Siberians" to see what will happen. "Perhaps its most general use has been to discover lost objects, and in this practice the seers" have very often been children, as we shall see was the case in the exhibition which gave Joe Smith his first idea on the subject. In

¹ Recent Experiments in Crystal Vision," Vol. V, "Proceedings of the Society for Psychical Research."

² Lang's "The Making of Religion," Chap. V.

³ "The Occult World."

the experiments cited by Lang, the seers usually saw distant persons or

scenes, and he records his belief that "experiments have proved beyond doubt that a fair percentage of people, sane and healthy, can see vivid landscapes, and figures of persons in motion, in glass balls and other vehicles."

It can easily be imagined how interested any member of the Smith family would have been in an exhibition like that of a "crystal-gazer," and we are able to trace very consecutively Joe's first introduction to the practice, and the use he made of the hint thus given.

Emily C. Blackman, in the appendix to her "History of Susquehanna County, Pennsylvania" (1873), supplies the needed important information about Joe's visits to Pennsylvania in the years preceding the announcement of his Bible. She says that it is uncertain when he arrived at Harmony (now Oakland), "but it is certain he was here in 1825 and later. "A very circumstantial account of Joe's first introduction to a "peep-stone" is given in a statement by J. B. Buck in this appendix. He says: --

"Joe Smith was here lumbering soon after my marriage, which was in 1818, some years before he took to 'peeping', and before diggings were commenced under his direction. These were ideas he gained later. The stone which he afterward used was in the possession of Jack Belcher of Gibson, who obtained it while at Salina, N. Y., engaged in drawing salt. Belcher bought it because it was said to be a 'seeing-stone.' I have often seen it. It was a green stone, with brown irregular spots on it. It was a little longer than a goose's egg, and about the same thickness. When he brought it home and covered it with a hat, Belcher's little boy was one of the first to look into the hat, and as he did so, he said he saw a candle. The second time he looked in he exclaimed, 'I've found my hatchet' (it had been lost two years), and immediately ran for it to the spot shown him through the stone, and it was there. The boy was soon beset by neighbors far and near to reveal to them hidden things, and he succeeded marvellously. Joe Smith, conceiving the idea of making a fortune through a similar process of 'seeing,' bought the stone of Belcher, and then began his operations in directing where hidden treasures could be found. His first diggings were near Capt. Buck's sawmill, at Red Rock; but because the followers broke the rule of silence, 'the enchantment removed the deposit.'"

One of many stories of Joe's treasure-digging, current in that neighborhood, Miss Blackman narrates. Learning from a strolling Indian of a place where treasure was said to be buried, Joe induced a farmer named Harper to join him in digging for it and to spend a considerable sum of money in the enterprise. "After digging a

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great hole, that is still to be seen, "the story continues, "Harper got discouraged, and was about abandoning the enterprise. Joe now declared to Harper that there was an 'enchantment' about the place that was removing the treasure farther off; that Harper must get a perfectly white dog (some said a black one), and sprinkle his blood over the ground, and that would prevent the 'enchantment' from removing the treasure. Search was made all over the country, but no perfectly white dog could be found. "Then Joe said a white sheep would do as well; but when this was sacrificed and failed, he said "The Almighty was displeased with him for attempting to palm off on Him a white sheep for a white dog. This informant describes Joe at that time as "an imaginative enthusiast, constitutionally opposed to work, and a general favorite with the ladies."

In confirmation of this, R. C. Doud asserted that "in 1822 he was employed, with thirteen others, by Oliver Harper to dig for gold under Joe's direction on Joseph McKune's land, and that Joe had begun operations the year previous."

F. G. Mather obtained substantially the same particulars of Joe's digging in connection with Harper from the widow of Joseph McKune about the year 1879, and he said that the owner of the farm at that time "for a number of years had been engaged in filling the holes with stone to protect his cattle, but the boys still use the northeast hole as a swimming pond in the summer."¹

Confirmation of the important parts of these statements has been furnished by Joseph's father. When the reports of the discovery of a new Bible first gained local currency (in 1830), Fayette Lapham decided to visit the Smith family, and learn what he could on the subject. He found the elder Smith very communicative, and he wrote out a report of his conversation with him, "as near as I can repeat his words, "he says, and it was printed in the *Historical Magazine* for May, 1870. Father Smith made no concealment of his belief in witchcraft and other things supernatural, as well as in the existence of a vast amount of buried treasure. What he said of Joe's initiation into "crystal-gazing" Mr. Lapham thus records: --

"His son Joseph, whom he called the illiterate,² when he was about fourteen years of age, happened to be where a man was looking into a dark stone, and

¹ *Lippincott's Magazine*, August, 1880.

² Joe's mother, describing Joe's descriptions to the family, at their evening fireside,

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telling people there from where to dig for money and other things. Joseph requested the privilege of looking into the stone, which he did by putting his face into the hat where the stone was. It proved to be not the right stone for him; but he could see some things, and among them he saw the stone, and where it was, in which he could see whatever he wished to see.... The place where he saw the stone was not far from their house, and under pretence of digging a well, they found water and the stone at a depth of twenty or twenty-two feet. After this, Joseph spent about two years looking into this stone, telling fortunes, where to find lost things, and where to dig for money and other hidden treasures."

If further confirmation of Joe's early knowledge on this subject is required, we may cite the Rev. John A. Clark, D. D., who, writing in 1840 after careful local research, said: "Long before the idea of a golden Bible entered their {the Smiths'} minds, in their excursions for money-digging.... Joe used to be usually their guide, putting into a hat a peculiar stone he had, through which he looked to decide where they should begin to dig."¹

We come now to the history of Joe's own "peek-stone" (as the family generally called it), that which his father says he discovered by using the one that he first saw. Willard Chase, of Manchester, New York, near Palmyra, employed Joe and his brother Alvin some time in the year 1822 (as he fixed the date in his affidavit),² to assist him in digging a well. "After digging about twenty feet below the surface of the earth, "he says, "we discovered a singularly appearing stone which excited my curiosity. I brought it to the top of the well, and as we were examining it, Joseph put it into his hat and then his face into the top of the hat. It has been said by Smith that he brought the stone from the well, but this is false. There was no one in the well but myself. The next morning he came to me and wished to obtain the stone, alleging that he could see in it; but I told him I did not wish to part with it on

account of its being a curiosity, but would lend it. After obtaining the stone, he began to publish abroad what wonders he could discover by looking in it, and made so much disturbance among the credulous part of the community that I ordered the stone to be returned to me again. He had it in his possession about two years. "

of the angel's revelations concerning the golden plates, says (p. 84): "All giving the most profound attention to a boy eighteen years of age, who had never read the Bible through in his life; he seemed much less inclined to the perusal of books than any of the rest of our children."

¹ "Gleanings by the Way" (1842), p. 225.

² Howe's "Mormonism Unveiled," p. 240.

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Joseph's brother Hyrum borrowed the stone some time in 1825, and Mr. Chase was unable to recover it afterward. Tucker describes it as resembling a child's foot in shape, and "of a whitish, glassy appearance, though opaque."¹

The Smiths at once began turning Chase's stone to their own financial account, but no one at the time heard that it was giving them any information about revealed religion. For pay they offered to disclose by means of it the location of stolen property and of buried money. There seemed to be no limit to the exaggeration of their professions. They would point out the precise spot beneath which lay kegs, barrels, and even hogsheads of gold and silver in the shape of coin, bars, images, candlesticks, etc., and they even asserted that all the hills thereabout were the work of human hands, and that Joe, by using his "peek-stone," could see the caverns beneath them.² Persons can always be found to give at least enough credence to such professions to desire to test them. It was so in this case. Joe not only secured small sums on the promise of discovering lost articles, but he raised money to enable him to dig for larger treasure which he was to locate by means of the stone. A Palmyra man, for instance, paid seventy-five cents to be sent by him on a fool's errand to look for some stolen cloth.

Certain ceremonies were always connected with these money-digging operations. Midnight was the favorite hour, a full moon was helpful,

and Good Friday was the best date. Joe would sometimes stand by, directing the digging with a wand. The utmost silence was necessary to success. More than once, when the digging proved a failure, Joe explained to his associates that, just as the deposit was about to be reached, some one, tempted by the devil, spoke, causing the wished-for riches to disappear. Such an explanation of his failures was by no means original with Smith, the serious results of an untimely spoken word having been long associated with divers magic performances. Joe even tried on his New York victims the Pennsylvania device of requiring the sacrifice of a black sheep to overcome the evil spirit that guarded the treasure. William Stafford opportunely owned such an animal,

¹ Tucker closes his chapter about this stone with the declaration "that the origin {of Mormonism} is traceable to the insignificant little stone found in the digging of Mr. Chase's well in 1822." Tucker was evidently ignorant both of Joe's previous experience with "crystal-gazing" in Pennsylvania and of "crystal-gazing" itself.

² William Stafford's affidavit, Howe's "Mormonism Unveiled," p. 237.

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and, as he puts it, "to gratify my curiosity, "he let the Smiths have it. But some new "mistake in the process" again resulted in disappointment. "This, I believe," remarks the contributor of the sheep, "is the only time they ever made money-digging a profitable business. "The Smiths ate the sheep. These money-seeking enterprises were continued from 1820 to 1827 (the year of the delivery to Smith of the golden plates). This period covers the years in which Joe, in his autobiography, confesses that he "displayed the corruption of human nature." He explains that his father's family were poor, and that they worked where they could find employment to their taste; "sometimes we were at home and sometimes abroad." Some of these trips took them to Pennsylvania, and the stories of Joe's "gazing" accomplishment may have reached Sidney Rigdon, and brought about their first interview. Susquehanna County was more thinly settled than the region around Palmyra, and Joe found persons who were ready to credit him with various "gifts;" and stories are still current there of his professed ability to perform miracles, to pray the frost away from a cornfield, and the like.¹

¹ *Lippincott's Magazine*, August, 1880.

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CHAPTER IV

FIRST ANNOUNCEMENT OF THE GOLDEN BIBLE

Just when Smith's attention was originally diverted from the discovery of buried money to the discovery of a buried Bible engraved on gold plates remains one of the unexplained points in his history. He was so much of a romancer that his own statements at the time, which were carefully collected by Howe, are contradictory. The description given of the buried volume itself changed from time to time, giving strength in this way to the theory that Rigdon was attracted to Smith by the rumor of his discovery, and afterward gave it shape. First the book was announced to be a secular history, says Dr. Clark; then a gold Bible; then golden plates engraved; and later metallic plates, stereotyped or embossed with golden letters.¹ Daniel Hendrix's recollection was that for the first few months Joe did not claim the plates any new revelation or religious significance, but simply that they were a historical record of an ancient people. This would indicate that he had possession of the "Spaulding Manuscript" before it received any theological additions.

The account of the revelation of the book by an angel, which is accepted by the Mormons, is the one elaborated in Smith's autobiography, and was not written until 1838, when it was prepared under the direction of Rigdon (or by him). Before examining this later version of the story, we may follow a little farther Joe's local history at the time.

While the Smiths were conducting their operations in Pennsylvania, and Joseph was "displaying the corruption of human nature," they boarded for a time in the family of Isaac Hale, who is described as a

"distinguished hunter, a zealous member of the Methodist church, "and (as later testified to by two judges of the Court of Common Pleas of Susquehanna County)" a man of

¹ "Gleanings by the Way," p. 229.

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excellent moral character and of undoubted veracity."¹ Mr. Hale had three daughters, and Joe received enough encouragement to his addresses to Emma to induce him to ask her father's consent to their marriage. This consent was flatly refused. Mr. Hale made a statement in 1834, covering his knowledge of Smith and the origin of the Mormon Bible.² When he became acquainted with the future prophet, in 1825, Joe was employed by the so-called "money-diggers," using his "peek-stone." Among the reasons which Mr. Hale gave for refusing consent to the marriage was that Smith was a stranger and followed a business which he could not approve.

Joe thereupon induced Emma to consent to an elopement, and they were married on January 18, 1827, by a justice of the peace, just across the line in New York State. Not daring to return to the house of his father-in-law, Joe took his wife to his own home, near Palmyra, New York, where for some months he worked again with his father.

In the following August Joe hired a neighbor named Peter Ingersol to go with him to Pennsylvania to bring from there some household effects belonging to Emma. Of this trip Ingersol said, in an affidavit made in 1833: --

"When we arrived at Mr. Hale's in Harmony, Pa., from which place he had taken his wife, a scene presented itself truly affecting. His father-in-law addressed Joseph in a flood of tears: 'You have stolen my daughter and married her. I had much rather have followed her to her grave. You spend your time in digging for money -- pretend to see in a stone, and thus try to deceive people.' Joseph wept and acknowledged that he could not see in a stone now nor never could, and that his former pretensions in that respect were false. He then promised to give up his old habits of digging for money and looking into stones. Mr. Hale told Joseph, if he would move to Pennsylvania and work for a living, he would assist him in getting into business. Joseph acceded to this proposition, then returned with Joseph and his wife to Manchester....

"Joseph told me on his return that he intended to keep the promise which he had made to his father-in-law; 'but,' said he, it will be hard for me, for they {his family} will all oppose, as they want me to look in the stone for them to dig money'; and in fact it was as he predicted. They urged him day after day to resume his old practice of looking in the stone. He seemed much perplexed as to the course he should pursue. In this dilemma he made me his confidant, and told me what daily transpired in the family of Smiths.

"One day he came and greeted me with joyful countenance. Upon asking the cause of his unusual happiness, he replied in the following language: 'As I

¹ Howe's "Mormonism Unveiled," p. 266.

² *Ibid.*, p. 262.

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was passing yesterday across the woods, after a heavy shower of rain, I found in a hollow some beautiful white sand that had been washed up by the water. I took off my frock and tied up several quarts of it, and then went home. On entering the house I found the family at the table eating dinner. They were all anxious to know the contents of my frock. At that moment I happened to think about a history found in Canada, called a Golden Bible;¹ so I very gravely told them it was the Golden Bible. To my surprise they were credulous enough to believe what I said. Accordingly I told them I had received a commandment to let no one see it, for, says I, no man can see it with the natural eye and live. However, I offered to take out the book and show it to them, but they refused to see it and left the room. 'Now,' said Joe, 'I have got the d---d fools fixed and will carry out the fun.' Notwithstanding he told me he had no such book and believed there never was such book, he told me he actually went to Willard Chase, to get him to make a chest in which he might deposit the Golden Bible. But as Chase would not do it, he made the box himself of clapboards, and put it into a pillow-case, and allowed people only to lift it and feel of it through the case."²

In line with this statement of Joe to Ingersol is a statement which somewhat later he made to his brother-in-law, Alva Hale, that "this 'peeking' was all d---d nonsense; that he intended to quit the business and labor for a livelihood."³

Joe's family were quite ready to accept his statement of his discovery of golden plates for more reasons than one. They saw in it, in the first

place, a means of pecuniary gain. Abigail Harris in a statement (dated "11th mo., 28th, 1833") of a talk she had with Joe's father and mother at Martin Harris's house, said: --

"They {the Smiths} said the plates Joe then had in possession were but an introduction to the Gold Bible; that all of them upon which the Bible was written were so heavy that it would take four stout men to load them into a cart; that Joseph had also discerned by looking through his stone the vessel in which the gold was melted from which the plates were made, and also the machine with which they were rolled; he also discovered in the bottom of the vessel three balls of gold, each as large as his fist. The old lady said also that after the book was translated, the plates were to be publicly exhibited, admission 25 cts."⁴

But aside from this pecuniary view, the idea of a new Bible would have been eagerly accepted by a woman like Mrs. Smith, and a mere intimation by Joe of such a discovery would have given him, in her, an instigator to the carrying out of the plot. It is said that she had predicted that she was to be the mother of a prophet. She tells us that although, in Vermont, she was a diligent church

¹ The most careful inquiries bring no information that any such story was ever current in Canada.

² Howe's "Mormonism Unveiled," p. 234.

³ *Ibid.*, p. 268.

⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 253.

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attendant, she found all preachers unsatisfactory, and that she reached the conclusion that "there was not on earth the religion she sought. "Joe, in his description of his state of mind just before the first visit of the angel who told him about the plates, describes himself as distracted by the "war and tumult of opinions. "He doubtless heard this subject talked of by his mother in the home circle, but none of his acquaintances at the time had any reason to think that he was laboring under such mental distress.

The second person in the neighborhood whom Joe approached about this discovery was Willard Chase, in whose well the "peek-stone" was

found. Mr. Chase in his statement (given at length by Howe) says that Joe applied to him, soon after the above quoted conversation with Ingersol, to make a chest in which to lock up his Gold Book, offering Chase an interest in it as compensation. He told Chase that the discovery of the book was due to the "peek-stone," making no allusion whatever to an angel's visit. He and Chase could not come to terms, and Joe accordingly made a box in which what he asserted were the plates were placed.

Reports of Joe's discovery soon gained currency in the neighborhood through the family's account of it, and neighbors who had accompanied them on the money-seeking expeditions came to hear about the new Bible, and to request permission to see it. Joe warded off these requests by reiterating that no man but him could look upon it and live. "Conflicting stories were afterward told," says Tucker, "in regard to the manner of keeping the book in concealment and safety, which are not worth repeating, further than to mention that the first place of secretion was said to be under a heavy hearthstone in the Smith family mansion."

Joe's mother and Parley P. Pratt tell of determined efforts of mobs and individuals to secure possession of the plates; but their statements cannot be taken seriously, and are contradicted by Tucker from personal knowledge. Tucker relates that two local wags, William T. Hussey and Azel Vandruver, intimate acquaintances of Smith, on asking for a sight of the book and hearing Joe's usual excuse, declared their readiness to risk their lives if that were the price of the privilege. Smith was not to be persuaded, but, the story continues, "they were permitted to go to the chest with its owner, and see *where* the thing was, and observe its shape and size, concealed under a piece of thick canvas. Smith,

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with his accustomed solemnity of demeanor, positively persisting in his refusal to uncover it, Hussey became impetuous, and (suiting his action to his word) ejaculated, 'Egad, I'll see the critter, live or die,' and stripping off the canvas, a large tile brick was exhibited. But Smith's fertile imagination was equal to the emergency. He claimed that his

friends had been sold by a trick of his."¹

Mother Smith, in her book, gives an account of proceedings in court brought by the wife of Martin Harris to protect her husband's property from Smith, on the plea that Smith was deceiving him in alleging the existence of golden plates; and she relates how one witness testified that Joe told him that "the box which he had contained nothing but sand, "that a second witness swore that Joe told him, "it was nothing but a box of lead, "and that a third witness declared that Joe had told him "there was nothing at all in the box. "When Joe had once started the story of his discovery, he elaborated it in his usual way. "I distinctly remember, "says Daniel Hendrix," his sitting on some boxes in the store and telling a knot of men, who did not believe a word they heard, all about his vision and his find. But Joe went into such minute and careful details about the size, weight, and beauty of the carvings on the golden tablets, and strange characters and the ancient adornments, that I confess he made some of the smartest men in Palmyra rub their eyes in wonder."

¹ "Origin, Rise, and Progress of Mormonism," p. 31.

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CHAPTER V

THE DIFFERENT ACCOUNTS OF THE REVELATION OF THE BIBLE

The precise date when Joe's attention was first called to the possibility of changing the story about his alleged golden plates so that they would serve as the basis for a new Bible such as was finally produced, and as a means of making him a prophet, cannot be ascertained. That some directing mind gave the final shape to the scheme is shown by the difference between the first accounts of his discovery by means of the stone, and the one provided in his autobiography. We have also

evidence that the story of a direct revelation by an angel came some time later than the version which Joe gave first to his acquaintances in Pennsylvania.

James T. Cobb of Salt Lake City, who has given much time to investigating matters connected with early Mormon history, received a letter under date of April 23, 1879, from Hiel and Joseph Lewis, sons of the Rev. Nathaniel Lewis, of Harmony, Pennsylvania, and relatives of Joseph's father-in-law, in which they gave the story of the finding of the plates as told in their hearing by Joe to their father, when he was translating them. This statement, in effect, was that he dreamed of an iron box containing gold plates curiously engraved, which he must translate into a book; that twice when he attempted to secure the plates he was knocked down, and when he asked why he could not have them, "he saw a man standing over the spot who, to him, appeared like a Spaniard, having a long beard down over his breast, with his throat cut from ear to ear and the blood streaming down, who told him that he could not get it alone." (He then narrated how he got the box in company with Emma.) In all this narrative there was not one word about visions of God, or of angels, or heavenly revelations; all his information was by that dream and that bleeding ghost. The heavenly visions and messages of angels,

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etc., contained in the Mormon books were afterthoughts, revised to order."

In direct confirmation of this we have the following account of the disclosure of the buried articles as given by Joe's father to Fayette Lapham when the Bible was first published: --

"Soon after joining the church he {Joseph} had a very singular dream.... A very large, tall man appeared to him dressed in an ancient suit of clothes, and the clothes were bloody. This man told him of a buried treasure, and gave him directions by means of which he could find the place. In the course of a year Smith did find it, and, visiting it by night, "I by some supernatural power" was enabled to overturn a huge boulder under which was a square block of masonry, in the centre of which were the articles as described. Taking up the first article, he saw others below; laying down the first, he endeavored to secure the others; but, before he could get hold of them, the

one he had taken up slid back to the place he had taken it from, and, to his great surprise and terror, the rock immediately fell back to its former place, nearly crushing him {Joseph} in its descent. (While trying in vain to raise the rock again with levers, Joseph felt something strike him on the breast, a third blow knocking him down; and as he lay on the ground he saw the tall man, who told him that the delivery of the articles would be deferred a year because Joseph had not strictly followed the directions given to him. The heedless Joseph allowed himself to forget the date fixed for his next visit, and when he went to the place again, the tall man appeared and told him that, because of his lack of punctuality, he would have to wait still another year before the hidden articles would be confided to him. "Come in one year from this time, and bring your oldest brother with you," said the guardian of the treasures, "then you may have them. "Before the date named arrived, the elder brother had died, and Joseph decided that his wife was the proper person to accompany him." (Mr. Lapham's report proceeds as follows:)

"At the expiration of the year he {Joseph} procured a horse and light wagon, with a chest and pillow-case, and proceeded punctually with his wife to find the hidden treasure. When they had gone as far as they could with the wagon, Joseph took the pillow-case and started for the rock. Upon passing a fence a host of devils began to screech and to scream, and make all sorts of hideous yells, for the purpose of terrifying him and preventing the attainment of his object; but Joseph was courageous and pursued his way in spite of them. Arriving at the stone, he again lifted it with the aid of superhuman power, as at first, and secured the first or uppermost article, this time putting it carefully into the pillow-case before laying it down. He now attempted to secure the remainder; but just then the same old man appeared, and said to him that the time had not yet arrived for their exhibition to the world, but that when the proper time came he should have them and exhibit them, with the one he had now secured; until that time arrived, no one must be allowed to touch the one he had in his possession; for if they did, they would be knocked down by some superhuman power. Joseph ascertained that the remaining articles were a gold hilt and chain, and a gold ball with two pointers. The hilt and chain had once been part of a sword

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of unusual size; but the blade had rusted away and become useless. Joseph then turned the rock back, took the article in the pillow-case, and returned to the wagon. The devils, with more hideous yells than before, followed him to the fence; as he was getting over the fence, one of the devils struck him a blow on the side, where a black and blue spot remained three or four days; but Joseph persevered and brought the article safely home. "I weighed it," said Mr. Smith, Sr., "and it weighed 30 pounds. In answer to our question as to what it was that Joseph had thus obtained, he said it consisted of a set of gold plates, about six inches wide and nine or ten inches long. They were in the form of a book."¹

We may now contrast these early accounts of the disclosure with the version given in the Prophet's autobiography (written, be it remembered, in Nauvoo in 1838), the one accepted by all orthodox Mormons. One of its striking features will be found to be the transformation of the Spaniard-with-his-throat-cut into a messenger from Heaven.²

It was, according to this later account, when he was in his fifteenth year, and when his father's family were "proselyted to the Presbyterian church," that he became puzzled by the divergent opinions he heard from different pulpits. One day, while reading the epistle of James (not a common habit of his, as his mother would testify), Joseph was struck by the words, "If any of you lack wisdom, let him ask of God. "Reflecting on this injunction, he retired to the woods" on the morning of a beautiful clear day early in the spring of 1820, and there he for the first time uttered a spoken prayer. "As soon as he began praying he was overcome by some power, and "thick darkness" gathered around him. Just when he was ready to give himself up as lost, he managed to call on God for deliverance, whereupon he saw a pillar of light descending upon him, and two personages of indescribable glory standing in the air above him, one of whom, calling him by name, said to the other, "This is my beloved Son, hear him. "Straightway Joseph, not forgetting the main object of his going to the woods, asked the two personages: "which of all the sects was right. "He was told that all were wrong, and that he must join none of them; that all creeds were an abomination, and that all professors were corrupt. He came to himself lying on his back. The effect on the boy of this startling manifestation was not radically beneficial, as he himself concedes. "Forbidden to join

¹ *Historical Magazine*, May, 1870.

² *Millennial Star*, Vol. XIV, Supt.

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any other religious sects of the day, of tender years, "and badly treated by persons who should have been his friends, he admits that in the next three years he "frequently fell into many foolish errors, and displayed

the weakness of youth and the corruption of human nature, which, I am sorry to say, led me into diverse temptations, to the gratification of many appetites offensive in the sight of God. "It was during this period that he was most active in the use of his "peek-stone."

On the night of September 21, 1823, to proceed with his own account, when again praying to God for the forgiveness of his sins, the room became light, and a person clothed in a robe of exquisite whiteness, and having "a countenance truly like lightning," called him by name, and said that his visitor was a messenger sent from God, and that his name was Nephi. This was a mistake on the part of somebody, because the visitor's real name was Moroni, who hid the plates where they were deposited. Smith continues: --

"He said there was a book deposited, written upon golden plates, giving an account of the former inhabitants of this continent and the source from whence they sprang. He also said that the fulness of the Everlasting Gospel was contained in it, as delivered by the Saviour to the ancient inhabitants. Also, there were two stones in silver bows (and these stones, fastened to a breastplate, constituted what is called the Urim and Thummim) deposited with the plates; and the possession and use of these stones was what constituted seers in ancient or former times, and that God had prepared them for the purpose of translating the book."

The messenger then made some liberal quotations from the prophecies of the Old Testament (changing them to suit his purpose), and ended by commanding Smith, when he got the plates, at a future date, to show them only to those as commanded, lest he be destroyed. Then he ascended into heaven. The next day the messenger appeared again, and directed Joseph to tell his father of the commandment which he had received. When he had done so, his father told him to go as directed. He knew the place (ever since known locally as "Mormon Hill") as soon as he arrived there, and his narrative proceeds as follows: --

"Convenient to the village of Manchester, Ontario Co., N. Y., stands a hill of considerable size, and the most elevated of any in the neighborhood. On the west side of this hill, not far from the top, under a stone of considerable size, lay the plates, deposited in a stone box; this stone was thick and rounded in the middle on the upper side, and thinner toward the edges, so that the middle part

of it was visible above the ground, but the edge all round was covered with earth. Having removed the earth and obtained a lever, which I got fixed under the edge of the stone, and with a little exertion raised it up, I looked in, and there, indeed, did I behold the plates, the Urim and Thummim and breastplate, as stated by the messenger. The box in which they lay was formed by laying stones together in a kind of cement. In the bottom of the box were laid two stones crosswise of the box, and on these stones lay the plates and the other things with them. I made an attempt to take them out, but was forbidden by the messenger. I was again informed that the time for bringing them out had not yet arrived, neither would till four years from that time; but he told me that I should come to that place precisely one year from that time, and that he would there meet with me, and that I should continue to do so until the time should come for obtaining the plates."

Mother Smith gives an explanation of Joe's failure to secure the plates on this occasion, which he omits: "As he was taking them, the unhappy thought darted through his mind that probably there was something else in the box besides the plates, which would be of pecuniary advantage to him.... Joseph was overcome by the power of darkness, and forgot the injunction that was laid upon him. "The mistakes which the Deity made in Joe's character constantly suggest to the lay reader the query why the Urim and Thummim were not turned on Joe.

On September 22, 1827, when Joe visited the hill (following his own story again), the same messenger delivered to him the plates, the Urim and Thummim and the breastplate, with the warning that if he "let them go carelessly" he would be "cut off," and a charge to keep them until the messenger called for them.

Mother Smith's story of the securing of the plates is to the effect that about midnight of September 21 Joseph and his wife drove away from his father's house with a horse and wagon belonging to a Mr. Knight. He returned after breakfast the next morning, bringing with him the Urim and Thummim, which he showed to her, and which she describes as "two smooth, three-cornered diamonds set in glass, and the glasses were set in silver bows that were connected with each other in much the same way as old-fashioned spectacles. "She says that she also saw the breastplate through a handkerchief, and that it "was concave on one side and convex on the other, and extended from the neck downward as far as the stomach of a man of extraordinary size. It had four straps of the same material for the purpose of fastening it to the breast....

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The whole plate was worth at least \$500." The spectacles and breastplate seem to have been more familiar to Mother Smith than to any other of Joseph's contemporaries and witnesses.

The substitution of the spectacles called Urim and Thummim for the "peek-stone" was doubtless an idea of the associate in the plot, who supplied the theological material found in the Golden Bible. Tucker considers the "spectacle pretension" an afterthought of some one when the scheme of translating the plates into a Bible was evolved, as "it was not heard of outside of the Smith family for a considerable period subsequent to the first story."¹ This is confirmed by the elder Smith's early account of the discovery. It would be very natural that Rigdon, with his Bible knowledge, should substitute the more respectable Urim and Thummim for the "peek-stone" of ill-repute, as the medium of translation.

The Urim and Thummim were the articles named by the Lord to Moses in His description of the priestly garments of Aaron. The Bible leaves them without description;² and the following verses contain all that is said of them: Exodus xxviii. 30; Leviticus viii. 8; Numbers xxvii. 21; Deuteronomy xxxiii. 8; Samuel xxviii. 6; Ezra ii. 63; Nehemiah vii. 65. Only a pretence of using spectacles in the work of translating was kept up, later descriptions of the process by Joe's associates referring constantly to the employment of the stone.

Joe says that while the plates were in his possession "multitudes" tried to get them away from him, but that he succeeded in keeping them until they were translated, and then delivered them again to the messenger, who still retains them. Mother Smith tells a graphic story of attempts to get the plates away

¹ "Origin, Rise, and Progress of Mormonism," p. 33.

² "The Hebrew words are generally considered to be plurales excellentia, denoting light (that is, revelation) and truth.... There are two principal opinions respecting the Urim and Thummim. One is that these words simply denote the four rows of precious stones in the breastplate of the high priest, and are so called from their brilliancy and perfection; which stones, in answer to an appeal to God in difficult cases, indicated His mind and will by some supernatural appearance.... The other principal opinion is that the Urim and Thummim were two small oracular images

similar to the Teraphim, personifying revelation and truth, which were placed in the cavity or pouch formed by the folds of the breastplate, and which uttered oracles by a voice.... We incline to Mr. Mede's opinion that the Urim and Thummim were 'things well known to the patriarchs' as divinely appointed means of inquiries of the Lord, suited to an infantile state of religion. "Cyclopedia of Biblical Literature," Kitto and Alexander, editors.

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from her son, and says that when he first received them he hid them until the next day in a rotten birch log, bringing them home wrapped in his linen frock under his arm.¹ Later, she says, he hid them in a hole dug in the hearth of their house, and again in a pile of flax in a cooper shop; Willard Chase's daughter almost found them once by means of a peek-stone of her own.

Mother Smith says that Joseph told all the family of his vision the evening of the day he told his father, charging them to keep it secret, and she adds: --

"From that time forth Joseph continued to receive instructions from the Lord, and we continued to get the children together every evening for the purpose of listening while he gave us a relation of the same. I presume our family presented an aspect as singular as any that ever lived upon the face of the earth -- all seated in a circle, father, mother, sons, and daughters, and giving the most profound attention to a boy eighteen years old, who had never read the Bible through in his life.... We were now confirmed in the opinion that God was about to bring to light something upon which we could stay our mind, or that would give us a more perfect knowledge of the plan of salvation and the redemption of the human family."

¹ Elder Hyde in his "Mormonism" estimates that "from the description given of them the plates must have weighed nearly two hundred pounds."

CHAPTER VI

TRANSLATION AND PUBLICATION OF THE BIBLE

The only one of his New York neighbors who seems to have taken a practical interest in Joe's alleged discovery was a farmer named Martin Harris, who lived a little north of Palmyra. Harris was a religious enthusiast, who had been a Quaker (as his wife was still), a Universalist, a Baptist, and a Presbyterian, and whose sanity it would have been difficult to establish in a surrogate's court. The Rev. Dr. Clark, who knew him intimately, says, "He had always been a firm believer in dreams, visions, and ghosts."¹ Howe describes him as often declaring that he had talked with Jesus Christ, angels, and the devil, and saying that "Christ was the handsomest man he ever saw, and the devil looked like a jackass, with very short, smooth hair similar to that of a mouse." Daniel Hendrix relates that as he and Harris were riding to the village one evening, and he remarked on the beauty of the moon, Harris replied that if his companion could only see it as he had, he might well call it beautiful, explaining that he had actually visited the moon, and adding that it "was only the faithful who were permitted to visit the celestial regions." Jesse Townsend, a resident of Palmyra, in a letter written in 1833, describes him as a visionary fanatic, unhappily married, who "is considered here to this day a brute in his domestic relations, a fool and a dupe to Smith in religion, and an unlearned, conceited hypocrite generally." His wife, in an affidavit printed in Howe's book (p. 255), says: "He has whipped, kicked, and turned me out of the house." Harris, like Joe's mother, was a constant reader of and a literal believer in the Bible. Tucker says that he "could probably repeat from memory every text from the Bible, giving the chapter and verse in each case. "This seems to be an exaggeration."¹

"Gleanings by the Way."

Mother Smith's account of Harris's early connection with the Bible enterprise says that her husband told Harris of the existence of the plates two or three years before Joe got possession of them; that when

Joe secured them he asked her to go and tell Harris that he wanted to see him on the subject, an errand not to her liking, because "Mr. Harris's wife was a very peculiar woman, "that is, she did not share in her husband's superstition. Mrs. Smith did not succeed in seeing Harris, but he soon afterward voluntarily offered Joe fifty dollars "for the purpose of helping Mr. Smith do the Lord's work. "As Harris was very "close" in money matters, it is probable that Joe offered him a partnership in the scheme at the start. Harris seems to have placed much faith in the selling quality of the new Bible. He is said to have replied to his wife's early declaration of disbelief in it: "What if it is a lie. If you will let me alone I will make money out of it."¹ The Rev. Ezra Booth said: "Harris informed me {after his removal to Ohio} that he went to the place where Joseph resided {in Pennsylvania}, and Joseph had given it {the translation} up on account of the opposition of his wife and others; and he told Joseph, 'I have not come down here for nothing, and we will go on with it.'"²

Just at this time Joe was preparing to move to the neighborhood of Harmony, Pennsylvania, having made a trip there after his marriage, during which, Mr. Hale's affidavit says, "Smith stated to me that he had given up what he called 'glass-looking,' and that he expected to work hard for a living and was willing to do so. "Smith's brother-in-law Alva, in accordance with arrangements then made, went to Palmyra and helped move his effects to a house near Mr. Hale's. Joe acknowledges that Harris's gift or loan of fifty dollars enabled him to meet the expenses of moving.

Parley P. Pratt, in a statement published by him in London in 1854, set forth that Smith was driven to Pennsylvania from Palmyra through fear of his life, and that he took the plates with him concealed in a barrel of beans, thus eluding the efforts of persons who tried to secure them by means of a search warrant. Tucker says that this story rests only on the sending of a constable after Smith by a man to whom he owed a small debt. The great interest manifested in the plates in the neighborhood

¹ Howe's "Mormonism Unveiled," p. 254.

² *Ibid.*, p. 182.

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of Palmyra existed only in Mormon imagination developed in later years.

According to some accounts, all the work of what was called "translating" the writing on the plates into what became the "Book of Mormon" was done at Joe's home in New York State, and most of it in a cave, but this was not the case. Smith himself says: "Immediately after my arrival {in Pennsylvania} I commenced copying the characters off the plates. I copied a considerable number of them, and by means of the Urim and Thummim I translated some of them, which I did between the time I arrived, at the house of my wife's father in the month of December {1827} and the February following."

A clear description of the work of translating as carried on in Pennsylvania is given in the affidavit made by Smith's father-in-law, Isaac Hale, in 1834.¹ He says that soon after Joe's removal to his neighborhood with his wife, he (Hale) was shown a box such as is used for the shipment of window glass, and was told that it contained the "book of plates;" he was allowed to lift it, but not to look into it. Joe told him that the first person who would be allowed to see the plates would be a young child.² The affidavit continues: --

"About this time Martin Harris made his appearance upon the stage, and Smith began to interpret the characters, or hieroglyphics, which he said were engraven upon the plates, while Harris wrote down the interpretation. It was said that Harris wrote down 116 pages and lost them. Soon after this happened, Martin Harris informed me that he must have a *greater witness*, and said that he had talked with Joseph about it. Joseph informed him that he could not, or durst not, show him the plates, but that he {Joseph} would go into the woods where the book of plates was, and that after he came back Harris should follow his track in the snow, and find the book and examine it for himself. Harris informed me that he followed Smith's directions, and could not find the plates and was still dissatisfied.

"The next day after this happened I went to the house where Joseph Smith, Jr., lived, and where he and Harris were engaged in their translation of the book. Each of them had a written piece of paper which they were comparing, and some of the words were, I my servant seeketh a greater witness, but no greater witness can be given him.... I inquired whose words they were, and was informed by Joseph or Emma (I rather think it was the former),

¹ Howe's "Mormonism Unveiled," p. 264.

² Joe's early announcement was that his first-born child was to have this power, but the child was born dead. This was one of the earliest of Joe's mistakes in prophesying.

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that they were the words of Jesus Christ. I told them that I considered the whole of it a delusion, and advised them to abandon it. The manner in which he pretended to read and interpret was the same as when he looked for the money-diggers, with the stone in his hat and his hat over his face, while the book of plates was at the same time hid in the woods.

"After this, Martin Harris went away, and Oliver Cowdery came and wrote for Smith, while he interpreted as above described....

"Joseph Smith, Jr., resided near me for some time after this, and I had a good opportunity of becoming acquainted with him, and somewhat acquainted with his associates; and I conscientiously believe, from the facts I have detailed, and from many other circumstances which I do not deem it necessary to relate, that the whole Book of Mormon (so-called) is a silly fabrication of falsehood and wickedness, got up for speculation, and with a design to dupe the credulous and unwary."

Harris's natural shrewdness in a measure overcame his fanaticism, and he continued to press Smith for a sight of the plates. Smith thereupon made one of the first uses of those "revelations" which played so important a part in his future career, and he announced one (Section 5, "Doctrine and Covenants"¹), in which "I, the Lord" declared to Smith that the latter had entered into a covenant with Him not to show the plates to any one except as the Lord commanded him. Harris finally demanded of Smith at least a specimen of the writing on the plates for submission to experts in such subjects. As Harris was the only man of means interested in this scheme of publication, Joe supplied him with a paper containing some characters which he said were copied from one of the plates. This paper increased Harris's belief in the reality of Joe's discovery, but he sought further advice before opening his purse. Dr. Clark describes a call Harris made on him early one morning, greatly excited, requesting a private interview. On hearing his story, Dr. Clark advised him that the scheme was a hoax, devised to extort money from him, but Harris showed the slip of paper containing the mysterious characters, and was not to be persuaded.

Seeking confirmation, however, Harris made a trip to New York City in order to submit the characters to experts there. Among others, he called on Professor Charles Anthon. His interview with Professor Anthon has been a cause of many and conflicting statements, some Mormons misrepresenting it for their own

¹ All references to the "Book of Doctrine and Covenants" refer to the sections and verses of the Salt Lake City edition of 1890.

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purposes and others explaining away the professor's accounts of it. The following statement was written by Professor Anthon in reply to an inquiry by E. D. Howe: --

"NEW YORK, February 17, 1834.

"DEAR SIR: I received your favor of the 9th, and lose no time in making a reply. The whole story about my pronouncing the Mormon inscription to be 'reformed Egyptian hieroglyphics' is perfectly false. Some years ago a plain, apparently simple-hearted farmer called on me with a note from Dr. Mitchell, of our city, now dead, requesting me to decypher, if possible, the paper which the farmer would hand me, and which Dr. M. confessed he had been unable to understand. Upon examining the paper in question, I soon came to the conclusion that it was all a trick -- perhaps a hoax. When I asked the person who brought it how he obtained the writing, he gave me, as far as I can recollect, the following account: A 'gold book' consisting of a number of plates fastened together in the shape of a book by wires of the same metal, had been dug up in the northern part of the state of New York, and along with the book an enormous pair of 'spectacles'! These spectacles were so large that, if a person attempted to look through them, his two eyes would have to be turned toward one of the glasses merely, the spectacles in question being altogether too large for the breadth of the human face. Whoever examined the plates through the spectacles, was enabled, not only to read them, but fully to understand their meaning. All this knowledge, however, was confined to a young man who had the trunk containing the book and spectacles in his sole possession. This young man was placed behind a curtain in the garret of a farmhouse, and being thus concealed from view, put on the spectacles occasionally, or rather, looked through one of the glasses, decyphered the characters in the book, and, having committed some of them to paper, handed copies from behind the curtain to those who stood on the outside. Not a word, however, was said about the plates being decyphered 'by the gift of God.' Everything in this way was effected by the large pair of spectacles. The farmer added that he had been requested to contribute a sum of money toward the publication of the 'golden book,' the contents of which would, as he had been assured, produce an entire change in the

world, and save it from ruin. So urgent had been these solicitations, that he intended selling his farm, and handing over the amount received to those who wished to publish the plates. As a last precautionary step, however, he had resolved to come to New York, and obtain the opinion of the learned about the meaning of the paper which he had brought with him, and which had been given him as part of the contents of the book, although no translation had been furnished at the time by the young man with the spectacles. On hearing this odd story, I changed my opinion about the paper, and, instead of viewing it any longer as a hoax upon the learned, I began to regard it as a part of a scheme to cheat the farmer of his money, and I communicated my suspicions to him, warning him to beware of rogues. He requested an opinion from me in writing, which, of course, I declined giving, and he then took his leave, carrying his paper with him. "This paper was in fact a singular scrawl. It consisted of all kinds of

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crooked characters, disposed in columns, and had evidently been prepared by some person who had before him at the time a book containing various alphabets. Greek and Hebrew letters, crosses and flourishes, Roman letters inverted, or placed sideways, were arranged and placed in perpendicular columns; and the whole ended in a rude delineation of a circle, divided into various compartments, decked with various strange marks, and evidently copied after the Mexican Calendar, given by Humbolt, but copied in such a way as not to betray the source whence it was derived. I am thus particular as to the contents of the paper, inasmuch as I have frequently conversed with my friends on the subject since the Mormonite excitement began, and well remember that the paper contained anything else but' Egyptian Hieroglyphics.'

"Some time after, the farmer paid me a second visit. He brought with him the golden book in print, and offered it to me for sale. I declined purchasing. He then asked permission to leave the book with me for examination. I declined receiving it, although his manner was strangely urgent. I adverted once more to the roguery which had been, in my opinion, practised upon him, and asked him what had become of the gold plates. He informed me that they were in a trunk with the large pair of spectacles. I advised him to go to a magistrate, and have the trunk examined. He said 'the curse of God' would come upon him should he do this. On my pressing him, however, to pursue the course which I had recommended, he told me he would open the trunk if I would take 'the curse of God' upon myself. I replied I would do so with the greatest willingness, and would incur every risk of that nature provided I could only extricate him from the grasp of the rogues. He then left me. "I have thus given you a full statement of all that I know respecting the origin of Mormonism, and must beg you, as a personal favor, to publish this letter immediately, should you find my name mentioned again by these wretched fanatics.

"Yours respectfully,

"CHARLES ANTHON."¹

While Mormon speakers quoted Anthon as vouching for the mysterious writing, their writers were more cautious. P. P. Pratt, in his "Voice of Warning" (1837), said that Professor Anthon was unable to decipher the characters, "but he presumed that if the original records could be brought, he could assist in translating them. Orson Pratt, in his "Remarkable Visions" (1848), saw in the Professor's failure only a verification of Isaiah xxix. 11 and 12: --

"And the vision of all is become unto you as the words of a book that is sealed, which men deliver to one that is learned, saying, Read this, I pray thee: and he saith, I cannot, for it is sealed: and the book is delivered to him that is not learned, saying, Read this, I pray thee: and he saith, I am not learned."

¹ "Mormonism Unveiled," pp. 270-272.

A letter from Professor Anthon to the Rev. Dr. Coit, rector of Trinity Church, New Rochelle, New York, dated April 3, 1841, containing practically the same statement, will be found in Clark's "Gleanings by the Way," pp. 233-238.

[facing page 040: Image, not reproduced here]

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John D. Lee, in his "Mormonism Unveiled," mentions the generally used excuse of the Mormons for the professor's failure to translate the writing, namely, that Anthon told Harris that "they were written in a sealed language, unknown to the present age." Smith, in his autobiography, quotes Harris's account of his interview as follows: --

"I went to New York City and presented the characters which had been translated, with the translation thereof, to Prof. Anthon, a man quite celebrated for his literary attainments. Prof. Anthon stated that the translation was correct, more so than any he had before seen translated from the Egyptian. I then showed him those which were not yet translated, and he said they were Egyptian, Chaldaic, Assyriac, and Arabic, and he said they were the true characters."

Harris declared that the professor gave him a certificate to this effect, but took it back and tore it up when told that an angel of God had revealed the plates to Joe, saying that "there were no such things as

ministering angels. "This account by Harris of his interview with Professor Anthon will assist the reader in estimating the value of Harris's future testimony as to the existence of the plates.

Harris's trip to New York City was not entirely satisfactory to him, and, as Smith himself relates, "He began to tease me to give him liberty to carry the writings home and show them, and desired of me that I would enquire of the Lord through the Urim and Thummim if he might not do so. "Smith complied with this request, but the permission was twice refused; the third time it was granted, but on condition that Harris would show the manuscript translation to only five persons, who were named, one of them being his wife.

In including Mrs. Harris in this list, the Lord made one of the greatest mistakes into which he ever fell in using Joe as a mouthpiece. Mrs. Harris's Quaker belief had led her from the start to protest against the Bible scheme, and to warn her husband against the Smith family, and she vigorously opposed his investment of any money in the publication of the book. On the occasion of his first visit to Joe in Pennsylvania, according to Mother Smith, Mrs. Harris was determined to accompany him, and he had to depart without her knowledge; and when he went the second time, she did accompany him, and she ransacked the house to find the "record" (as the plates are often called in the Smiths' writings).

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When Harris returned home with the translated pages which Joe intrusted to him (in July, 1828), he showed them to his family and to others, who tried in vain to convince him that he was a dupe. Mrs. Harris decided on a more practical course. Getting possession of the papers, where Harris had deposited them for safe keeping, she refused to restore them to him. What eventually became of them is uncertain, one report being that she afterward burned them.

This should have caused nothing more serious in the way of delay than the time required to retranslate these pages; for certainly a well-equipped Divinity, who was revealing a new Bible to mankind, and supplying so powerful a means of translation as the Urim and

Thummim, could empower the translator to repeat the words first written. Indeed, the descriptions of the method of translation given afterward by Smith's confederates would seem to prove that there could have been but one version of any translation of the plates, no matter how many times repeated. Thus, Harris described the translating as follows: --

"By aid of the seer stone {no mention of the magic spectacles} sentences would appear and were read by the prophet and written by Martin, and, when finished, he would say 'written'; and if correctly written, that sentence would disappear, and another appear in its place; but if not written correctly, it remained until corrected, so that the translation was just as it was engraven on the plates, precisely in the language then used."¹

David Whitmer, in an account of this process written in his later years, said: --

"Joseph would put the seer stone into a hat {more testimony against the use of the spectacles} and put his face in the hat, drawing it closely around his face to exclude the light; and in the darkness the spiritual light would shine. A piece of something resembling parchment would appear, and on that appeared the writing. One character at a time would appear, and under it was the translation in English. Brother Joseph would read off the English to O. Cowdery, who was his principal scribe, and when it was written down and repeated to brother Joseph to see if it were correct, then it would disappear and another character with the interpretation would appear."²

But to Joseph the matter of reproducing the lost pages of the translation did not seem simple. When Harris's return to Pennsylvania was delayed, Joe became anxious and went to Palmyra to

¹ Elder Edward Stevenson in the Deseret News (quoted in Reynold's "Mystery of the Manuscript Fund," p. 91).

² "Address to Believers in the Book of Mormon."

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learn what delayed him, and there he heard of Mrs. Harris's theft of the pages. His mother reports him as saying in announcing it, "my God, all is lost! all is lost!" Why the situation was as serious to a sham translator as it would have been simple to an honest one is easily

understood. Whenever Smith offered a second translation of the missing pages which differed from the first, a comparison of them with the latter would furnish proof positive of the fraudulent character of his pretensions.

All the partners in the business had to share in the punishment for what had occurred. The Smiths lost all faith in Harris. Joe says that Harris broke his pledge about showing the translation only to five persons, and Mother Smith says that because of this offense "a dense fog spread itself over his fields and blighted his wheat. "When Joe returned to Pennsylvania an angel appeared to him, his mother says, and ordered him to give up the Urim and Thummim, promising, however, to restore them if he was humble and penitent, and "if so, it will be on the 22d of September."¹ Here may be noted one of those failures of mother and son to agree in their narratives which was excuse enough for Brigham Young to try to suppress the mother's book. Joe mentions a "revelation" dated July, 1828 (Sec. 3, "Doctrine and Covenants"), in which Harris was called "a wicked man, "and which told Smith that he had lost his privileges for a season, and he adds, "After I had obtained the above revelation, both the plates and the Urim and Thummim were taken from me again, *but in a few days* they were returned to me."²

For some ten months after this the work of translation was discontinued, although Mother Smith says that when she and his father visited the prophet in Pennsylvania two months after his return, the first thing they saw was "a red morocco trunk lying on Emma's bureau which, Joseph shortly informed me, contained the Urim and Thummim and the plates." Mrs. Harris's act had evidently thrown the whole machinery of translation out of gear, and Joe had to await instructions from his human adviser before a plan of procedure could be announced. During this period (in which Joe says he worked on his father's farm), says Tucker, "the stranger {supposed to be Rigdon} had again been at Smith's, and

¹ "Biographical Sketches," by Lucy Smith, p. 125.

² *Millennial Star*, Vol. XIV, p. 8.

the prophet had been away from home, maybe to repay the former's visits."¹

Two matters were decided on in these consultations, viz., that no attempt would be made to retranslate the lost pages, and that a second copy of all the rest of the manuscript should be prepared, to guard against a similar perplexity in case of the loss of later pages. The proof of the latter statement I find in the fact that a second copy did exist. Ebenezer Robinson, who was a leading man in the church from the time of its establishment in Ohio until Smith's death, says in his recollections that, when the people assembled on October 2, 1841, to lay the corner-stone of Nauvoo House, Smith said he had a document to put into the corner-stone, and Robinson went with him to his house to procure it. Robinson's story proceeds as follows: --

"He got a manuscript copy of the Book of Mormon, and brought it into the room where we were standing, and said, 'I will examine to see if it is all here'; and as he did so I stood near him, a this left side, and saw distinctly the writing as he turned up the pages until he hastily went through the book and satisfied himself that it was all there, when he said, 'I have had trouble enough with this thing'; which remark struck me with amazement, as I looked upon it as a sacred treasure."

Robinson says that the manuscript was written on foolscap paper and most of it in Oliver Cowdery's handwriting. He explains that two copies were necessary, "as the printer who printed the first edition of the book had to have a copy, as they would not put the original copy into his hands for fear of its being altered. This accounts for David Whitmer having a copy and Joseph Smith having one."²

Major Bideman, who married the prophet's widow, partly completed and occupied Nauvoo House after the departure of the Mormons for Utah, and some years later he took out the cornerstone and opened it, but found the manuscript so ruined by moisture that only a little was legible.

¹ "Origin, Rise, and Progress of Mormonism," p. 48.

² *The Return*, Vol. II, p. 314. Ebenezer Robinson, a printer, joined the Mormons at Kirtland, followed Smith to Missouri, and went with the flock to Nauvoo, where he and the prophet's brother, Don Carlos, established the *Times and Seasons*. When the doctrine of polygamy was announced to him and his wife, they rejected it, and he followed Rigdon to Pennsylvania when Rigdon was turned out by Young. In later years he was engaged in business enterprises in Iowa, and was a resident of Davis

City when David Whitmer announced the organization of his church in Missouri, and, not accepting the view of the prophet entertained by his descendants in the Reorganized Church, Robinson accepted baptism from Whitmer. *The Return* was started by him in January, 1889, and continued until his death, in its second year. His reminiscences of early Mormon experiences, which were a feature of the publication, are of value.

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In regard to the missing pages, it was decided to announce a revelation, which is dated May, 1829 (Sec. 10, "Doctrine and Covenants"), stating that the lost pages had got into the hands of wicked men, that "Satan has put it into their hearts to alter the words which you have caused to be written, or which you have translated, "in accordance with a plan of the devil to destroy Smith's work. He was directed therefore to translate from the plates of Nephi, which contained a "more particular account" than the Book of Lehi from which the original translation was made.

When Smith began translating again, Harris was not reemployed, but Emma, the prophet's wife, acted as his scribe until April 15, 1829, when a new personage appeared upon the scene. This was Oliver Cowdery.

Cowdery was a blacksmith by trade, but gave up that occupation, and, while Joe was translating in Pennsylvania, secured the place of teacher in the district where the Smiths lived, and boarded with them. They told him of the new Bible, and, according to Joe's later account, Cowdery for himself received a revelation of its divine character, went to Pennsylvania, and from that time was intimately connected with Joe in the translation and publication of the book.

In explanation of the change of plan necessarily adopted in the translation, the following preface appeared in the first edition of the book, but was dropped later: --

"TO THE READER.

"As many false reports have been circulated respecting the following work, and also many unlawful measures taken by evil designing persons to destroy me, and also the work, I would inform you that I translated, by the gift and power of God, and caused

to be written, one hundred and sixteen pages, the which I took from the book of Lehi, which was an account abridged from the plates of Lehi, by the hand of Mormon; which said account, some person or persons have stolen and kept from me, notwithstanding my utmost efforts to recover it again -- and being commanded of the Lord that I should not translate the same over again, for Satan had put it into their hearts to tempt the Lord their God, by altering the words; that they did read contrary from that which I translated and caused to be written; and if I should bring forth the same words again, or, in other words, if I should translate the same over again, they would publish that which they had stolen, and Satan would stir up the hearts of this generation, that they might not receive this work, but behold, the Lord said unto me, I will not suffer that Satan shall accomplish his evil design in this thing; therefore thou shalt translate from the plates of Nephi until ye come to that which ye have translated, which ye have

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retained; and behold, ye shall publish it as the record of Nephi; and thus I will confound those who have altered my words. I will not suffer that they shall destroy my work; yea, I will show unto them that my wisdom is greater than the cunning of the Devil. Wherefore, to be obedient unto the commandments of God, I have, through His grace and mercy, accomplished that which He hath commanded me respecting this thing. I would also inform you that the plates of which hath been spoken, were found in the township of Manchester, Ontario County, New York. -- THE AUTHOR."

In June, 1829, Smith accepted an invitation to change his residence to the house of Peter Whitmer, who, with his sons, David, John, and Peter, Jr., lived at Fayette, Seneca County, New York, the Whitmers promising his board free and their assistance in the work of translation. There, Smith says, they resided "until the translation was finished and the copyright secured."

As five of the Whitmers were "witnesses" to the existence of the plates, and David continued to be a person of influence in Mormon circles throughout his long life, information about them is of value. The prophet's mother again comes to our aid, although her account conflicts with her son's. The prophet says that David Whitmer brought the invitation to take up quarters at his father's, and volunteered the offer of free board and assistance. Mother Smith says that one day, as Joe was translating the plates, he came, in the midst of the words of the Holy Writ, to a commandment to write at once to David Whitmer, requesting him to come immediately and take the prophet and

Cowdery to his house, "as an evil designing people were seeking to take away his {Joseph's} life in order to prevent the work of God from going forth to the world." When the letter arrived, David's father told him that, as they had wheat sown that would require two days' harrowing, and a quantity of plaster to spread, he could not go "unless he could get a witness from God that it was absolutely necessary." In answer to his inquiry of the Lord on the subject, David was told to go as soon as his wheat was harrowed in. Setting to work, he found that at the end of the first day the two days' harrowing had been completed, and, on going out the next morning to spread the plaster, he found that work done also, and his sister told him she had seen three unknown men at work in the field the day before: so that the task had been accomplished by "an exhibition of supernatural power."¹

¹ "Biographical Sketches," Lucy Smith, p. 135.

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The translation being ready for the press, in June, 1829 (I follow Tucker's account of the printing of the work), Joseph, his brother Hyrum, Cowdery, and Harris asked Egbert B. Grandin, publisher of the *Wayne Sentinel* at Palmyra, to give them an estimate of the cost of printing an edition of three thousand copies, with Harris as security for the payment. Grandin told them he did not want to undertake the job at any price, and he tried to persuade Harris not to invest his money in the scheme, assuring him that it was fraudulent. Application was next made to Thurlow Weed, then the publisher of the *Anti-Masonic Inquirer*, at Rochester, New York. "After reading a few chapters," says Mr. Weed, "it seemed such a jumble of unintelligent absurdities that we refused the work, advising Harris not to mortgage his farm and "beggar his family." Finally, Smith and his associates obtained from Elihu F. Marshall, a Rochester publisher, a definite bid for the work, and with this they applied again to Grandin, explaining that it would be much more convenient for them to have the printing done at home, and pointing out to him that he might as well take the job, as his refusal would not prevent the publication of the book. This argument had weight with him, and he made a definite contract to print and bind five thousand copies for the sum of \$3000, a mortgage on Harris's farm to be given him as security. Mrs. Harris had persisted in her

refusal to be in any way a party to the scheme, and she and her husband had finally made a legal separation, with a division of the property, after she had entered a complaint against Joe, charging him with getting money from her husband on fraudulent representation. At the hearing on this complaint, Harris denied that he had ever contributed a dollar to Joe at the latter's persuasion.

Tucker, who did much of the proof-reading of the new Bible, comparing it with the manuscript copy, says that, when the printing began, Smith and his associates watched the manuscript with the greatest vigilance, bringing to the office every morning as much as the printers could set up during the day, and taking it away in the evening, forbidding also any alteration. The foreman, John H. Gilbert, found the manuscript so poorly prepared as regards grammatical construction, spelling, punctuation, etc., that he told them that some corrections must be made, and to this they finally consented.

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Daniel Hendrix, in his recollections, says in confirmation of this: --

"I helped to read proof on many pages of the book, and at odd times set some type.... The penmanship of the copy furnished was good, but the grammar, spelling and punctuation were done by John H. Gilbert, who was chief compositor in the office. I have heard him swear many a time at the syntax and orthography of Cowdery, and declare that he would not set another line of the type. There were no paragraphs, no punctuation and no capitals. All that was done in the printing office, and what a time there used to be in straightening sentences out, too. During the printing of the book I remember that Joe Smith kept in the background."

The following letter is in reply to an inquiry addressed by me to Albert Chandler, the only survivor, I think, of the men who helped issue the first edition of Smith's book: --

"COLDWATER, MICH., Dec. 22, 1898.

"My recollections of Joseph Smith, Jr. and of the first steps taken in regard to his Bible have never been printed. At the time of the printing of the Mormon Bible by Egbert B. Grandin of the *Sentinel* I was an apprentice in the book-binding connected with the *Sentinel* office. I helped to collate and stitch the Gold Bible, and soon after this was completed, I changed from book-binding to printing. I learned my trade in the *Sentinel* office.

"My recollections of the early history of the Mormon Bible are vivid to-day. I knew personally Oliver Cowdery, who translated the Bible, Martin Harris, who mortgaged his farm to procure the printing, and Joseph Smith Jr., but slightly. What I knew of him was from hearsay, principally from Martin Harris, who believed fully in him. Mr. Tucker's 'Origin, Rise, and Progress of Mormonism' is the fullest account I have ever seen. I doubt if I can add anything to that history.

"The whole history is shrouded in the deepest mystery. Joseph Smith Jr., who read through the wonderful spectacles, pretended to give the scribe the exact reading of the plates, even to spelling, in which Smith was woefully deficient. Martin Harris was permitted to be in the room with the scribe, and would try the knowledge of Smith, as he told me, saying that Smith could not spell the word February, when his eyes were off the spectacles through which he pretended to work. This ignorance of Smith was proof positive to him that Smith was dependent on the spectacles for the contents of the Bible. Smith and the plates containing the original of the Mormon Bible were hid from view of the scribe and Martin Harris by a screen.

"I should think that Martin Harris, after becoming a convert, gave up his entire time to advertising the Bible to his neighbors and the public generally in the vicinity of Palmyra. He would call public meetings and address them himself. He was enthusiastic, and went so far as to say that God, through the Latter Day Saints, was to rule the world. I heard him make this statement, that there

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would never be another President of the United States elected; that soon all temporal and spiritual power would be given over to the prophet Joseph Smith and the Latter Day Saints. His extravagant statements were the laughing stock of the people of Palmyra. His stories were hissed at, universally. To give you an idea of Mr. Harris's superstitions, he told me that he saw the devil, in all his hideousness, on the road, just before dark, near his farm, a little north of Palmyra. You can see that Harris was a fit subject to carry out the scheme of organizing a new religion.

"The absolute secrecy of the whole inception and publication of the Mormon Bible stopped positive knowledge. We only knew what Joseph Smith would permit Martin Harris to publish, in reference to the whole thing."

The issuing of the Book of Mormon scarcely made a ripple of excitement in Palmyra.

ALBERT CHANDLER."¹

The book was published early in 1830. On paper the sale of the first edition showed a profit of \$3250 at \$1.25 a volume, that being the

lowest price to be asked on pain of death, according to a "special revelation" received by Smith. By the original agreement Harris was to have the exclusive control of the sale of the book. But it did not sell. The local community took it no more seriously than they did Joe himself and his family. The printer demanded his pay as the work progressed, and it became necessary for Smith to spur Harris on by announcing a revelation (Sec. 19, "Doctrine and Covenants"), saying, "I command thee that thou shalt not covet thine own property, but impart it freely to the printing of the Book of Mormon. "Harris accordingly disposed of his share of the farm and paid Grandin.

To make the book "go," Smith now received a revelation which permitted his father, soon to be elevated to the title of Patriarch, to sell it on commission, and Smith, Sr., made expeditions through the country, taking in pay for any copies sold such farm produce or "store goods" as he could use in his own family. How much he "cut" the revealed price of the book in these trades is not known, but in one instance, when arrested in Palmyra for a debt of \$5.63, he, under pledge of secrecy, offered seven of the Bibles in settlement, and the creditor, knowing that the old man had no better assets, accepted the offer as a joke.²

¹ Mr. Chandler moved to Michigan in 1835, and has been connected with several newspapers in that state, editing the *Kalamazoo Gazette*, and founding and publishing the *Coldwater Sentinel*. He was elected the first mayor of Coldwater, serving several terms. He was in his eighty-fifth year when the above letter was written.

² "Origin, Rise, and Progress of Mormonism," Tucker, p. 63.

CHAPTER VII

THE SPAULDING MANUSCRIPT

The history of the Mormon Bible has been brought uninterruptedly to this point in order that the reader may be able to follow clearly each step that had led up to its publication. It is now necessary to give attention to two subjects intimately connected with the origin of this book, viz., the use made of what is known as the "Spaulding manuscript," in supplying the historical part of the work, and Sidney Rigdon's share in its production.

The most careful student of the career of Joseph Smith, Jr., and of his family and his associates, up to the year 1827, will fail to find any ground for the belief that he alone, or simply with their assistance, was capable of composing the Book of Mormon, crude in every sense as that work is. We must therefore accept, as do the Mormons, the statement that the text was divinely revealed to Smith, or must look for some directing hand behind the scene, which supplied the historical part and applied the theological. The "Spaulding manuscript" is believed to have furnished the basis of the historical part of the work.

Solomon Spaulding, born in Ashford, Connecticut, in 1761, was graduated from Dartmouth College in 1785, studied divinity, and for some years had charge of a church. His own family described him as a peculiar man, given to historical researches, and evidently of rather unstable disposition. He gave up preaching, conducted an academy at Cherry Valley, New York, and later moved to Conneaut, Ohio, where in 1812 he had an interest in an iron foundry. His attention was there attracted to the ancient mounds in that vicinity, and he set some of his men to work exploring one of them. "I vividly remember how excited he became,"

says his daughter, " when he heard that they had exhumed some human bones, portions of gigantic skeletons, and various

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relics." From these discoveries he got the idea of writing a fanciful history of the ancient races of this country.

The title he chose for his book was "The Manuscript Found." He considered this work a great literary production, counted on being able to pay his debts from the proceeds of its sale, and was accustomed to read selections from the manuscript to his neighbors with evident pride. The impression that such a production would be likely to make on the author's neighbors in that frontier region and in those early days, when books were scarce and authors almost unknown, can with difficulty be realized now. Barrett Wendell, speaking of the days of Bryant's early work, says: "Ours was a new country... deeply and sensitively aware that it lacked a literature. Whoever produced writings which could be pronounced adorable was accordingly regarded by his fellow citizens as a public benefactor, a great public figure, a personage of whom the nation could be proud."¹ This feeling lends weight to the testimony of Mr. Spaulding's neighbors, who in later years gave outlines of his work.

In order to find a publisher Mr. Spaulding moved with his family to Pittsburg, Pennsylvania. A printer named Patterson spoke well of the manuscript to its author, but no one was found willing to publish it. The Spauldings afterward moved to Amity, Pennsylvania, where Mr. Spaulding died in 1816. His widow and only child went to live with Mrs. Spaulding's brother, W. H. Sabine, at Onondaga Valley, New York, taking

their effects with them. These included an old trunk containing Mr. Spaulding's papers. "There were sermons and other papers," says his daughter," and I saw a manuscript about an inch thick, closely written, tied up with some stories my father had written for me, one of which he called 'The Frogs of Windham.' On the outside of this manuscript were written the words 'Manuscript Found.' I did not read it, but looked through it, and had it in my hands many times, and saw the names I had heard at Conneaut, when my father read it to his friends." Mrs. Spaulding next went to her father's house in Connecticut, leaving her personal property at her brother's. She married a Mr. Davison in 1820, and the old trunk was sent to her at her new home in Hartwick, Otsego County, New York. The daughter was married to a Mr. McKinstry

¹ "Literary History of America."

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in 1828, and her mother afterward made her home with her at Monson, Massachusetts, most of the time until her death in 1844.

When the newly announced Mormon Bible began to be talked about in Ohio, there were immediate declarations in Spaulding's old neighborhood of a striking similarity between the Bible story .and the story that Spaulding used to read to his acquaintances there, and these became positive assertions after the Mormons had held a meeting at Conneaut. The opinion was confidently expressed there that, if the manuscript could be found and published, it would put an end to the Mormon pretence.

About the year 1834 Mrs. Davison received a visit at Monson from D. P. Hurlbut, a man who had gone over to the Mormons from the Methodist church, and

had apostatized and been expelled. He represented that he had been sent by a committee to secure "The Manuscript Found" in order that it might be compared with the Mormon Bible. As he brought a letter from her brother, Mrs. Davison, with considerable reluctance, gave him an introduction to George Clark, in whose house at Hartwick she had left the old trunk, directing Mr. Clark to let Hurlbut have the manuscript, receiving his verbal pledge to return it. He obtained a manuscript from this trunk, but did not keep his pledge.¹

The *Boston Recorder* published in May, 1839, a detailed statement by Mrs. Davison concerning her knowledge of "The Manuscript Found," After giving an account of the writing of the story, her Statement continued as follows: --

"Here (in Pittsburg) Mr. Spaulding found a friend and acquaintance in the person of Mr. Patterson, who was very much pleased with it, and borrowed it for perusal. He retained it for a long time, and informed Mr. Spaulding that, if he would make out a title-page and preface, he would publish it, as it might be a source of profit. This Mr. Spaulding refused to do. Sidney Rigdon, who has figured so largely in the history of the Mormons, was at that time connected with the printing office of Mr. Patterson, as is well known in that region, and, as Rigdon himself has frequently stated, became acquainted with Mr. Spaulding's manuscript and copied it. It was a matter of notoriety and interest to all connected with the printing establishment. At length the manuscript was returned to its author, and soon after we removed to Amity where Mr. Spaulding deceased in 1816. The manuscript then fell into my hands, and was carefully preserved."

¹ Condensed from an affidavit by Mrs. McKinstry, dated April 3, 1880, in *Scribner's Magazine* for August, 1880.

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This statement stirred up the Mormons greatly, and

they at once pronounced the letter a forgery, securing from Mrs. Davison a statement in which she said that she did not write it. This was met with a counter statement by the Rev. D. R. Austin that it was made up from notes of a conversation with her, and was correct. In confirmation of this the *Quincy* (Massachusetts) [sic] *Whig* printed a letter from John Haven of Holliston, Massachusetts, giving a report of a conversation between his son Jesse and Mrs. Davison concerning this letter, in which she stated that the letter was substantially correct, and that some of the names used in the Mormon Bible were like those in her husband's story. Rigdon himself, in a letter addressed to the *Boston Journal*, [sic] under date of May 27, 1839, denied all knowledge of Spaulding, and declared that there was no printer named Patterson in Pittsburg during his residence there, although he knew a Robert Patterson who had owned a printing-office in that city. The larger part of his letter is a coarse attack on Hurlbut and also on E. D. Howe, the author of "Mormonism Unveiled," whose whole family he charged with "scandalous immoralities." If the use of Spaulding's story in the preparation of the Mormon Bible could be proved by nothing but this letter of Mrs. Davison, the demonstration would be weak; but this is only one link in the chain.

Howe, in his painstaking efforts to obtain all probable information about the Mormon origin from original sources, secured the affidavits of eight of Spaulding's acquaintances in Ohio, giving their recollections of the "Manuscript Found."¹ Spaulding's brother John testified that he heard many passages of the manuscript read and, describing it, he said: --

"It was an historical romance of the first settlers of America, endeavoring to show that the American Indians are the descendants of the Jews, or the lost tribe[s]. It gave a detailed account of their journey from Jerusalem, by land and sea, till they arrived in America, under the command of Nephi and Lehi. They afterwards had quarrels and contentions, and separated into two distinct nations, one of which he denominated Nephites, and the

other Lamanites. Cruel and bloody wars ensued, in which great multitudes were slain.... I have recently read the 'Book of Mormon,' and to my great surprise I find nearly the same historical matter, names, etc., as they were in my brother's writings. I well remember that he wrote in the old style, and commenced about every sentence with 'and it came pass,' or 'now it came to pass,' the same as in the 'Book of Mormon,' and, according

¹ Howe's "Mormonism Unveiled," pp. 278-287.

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to the best of my recollection and belief, it is the same as my brother Solomon wrote, with the exception of the religious matter."

John Spaulding's wife testified that she had no doubt that the historical part of the Bible and the manuscript were the same, and she well recalled such phrases as "it came to pass."

Mr. Spaulding's business partner at Conneaut, Henry Lake, testified that Spaulding read the manuscript to him many hours, that the story running through it and the Bible was the same, and he recalls this circumstance: "One time, when he was reading to me the tragic account of Laban, I pointed out to him what I considered an inconsistency, which he promised to correct, but by referring to the 'Book of Mormon,' I find that it stands there just as he read it to me then.... I well recollect telling Mr. Spaulding that the so frequent use of the words 'and it came to pass,' [and] 'now it came to pass,' rendered it ridiculous."

John N. Miller, an employee of Spaulding in Ohio, and a boarder in his family for several months, testified that Spaulding had written more than one book or pamphlet, that he had heard the author read

from the "Manuscript Found," that he recalled the story running through it, and added: "I have recently examined the 'Book of Mormon,' and find in it the writings of Solomon Spaulding, from beginning to end, but mixed up with Scripture and other religious matter which I did not meet with in the 'Manuscript Found.'... The names of Nephi, Lehi, Moroni, and in fact all the principal names, are brought fresh to my recollection by the 'Gold Bible.' "

Practically identical testimony was given by the four other neighbors. Important additions to this testimony have been made in later years. A statement by Joseph Miller of Amity, Pennsylvania, a man of standing in that community, was published in the *Pittsburg Telegraph* of February 6, 1879. Mr. Miller said that he was well acquainted with Spaulding when he lived at Amity, and heard him read most of the "Manuscript Found," and had read the Mormon Bible in late years to compare the two. "On hearing read," he says, "the account from the book of the battle between the Amlicites (Book of Alma), in which the soldiers of one army had placed a red mark on their foreheads to distinguish them from their enemies, it seemed to reproduce in my mind, not only the narration, but the very words as they had been impressed

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on my mind by the reading of Spaulding's manuscript.... The longer I live, the more firmly I am convinced that Spaulding's manuscript was appropriated and largely used in getting up the 'Book of Mormon.'"

Redick McKee, a resident of Amity, Pennsylvania, when Spaulding lived there, and later a resident of Washington, D. C., in a letter to the *Washington (Pennsylvania) Reporter*, of April 21, 1869, stated that

he heard Spaulding read from his manuscript: and added: "I have an indistinct recollection of the passage referred to by Mr. Miller about the Amlicites making a cross with red paint on their foreheads to distinguish them from enemies in battle."

The Rev. Abner Judson, [sic] of Canton, Ohio, wrote for the Washington County, Pennsylvania, Historical Society, under date of December 20, 1880, an account of his recollections of the Spaulding manuscript, and it was printed in the *Washington (Pennsylvania) Reporter*, of January 7, 1881. Spaulding read a large part of his manuscript to Mr. Judson's father before the author moved to Pittsburg, and the son, confined to the house with a lameness, heard the reading and the accompanying conversations. He says: --

"He wrote it in the Bible style. 'And it came to pass,' occurred so often that some called him 'Old Come-to-pass.' The 'Book of Mormons' follows the romance too closely to be a stranger.... When it was brought to Conneaut and read there in public, old Esquire Wright heard it and exclaimed, "'Old Come-to-pass' has come to life again."¹

The testimony of so many witnesses, so specific in its details, seems to prove the identity of Spaulding's story and the story running through the Mormon Bible. The late President James H. Fairchild of Oberlin, Ohio, whose pamphlet on the subject we shall next examine, admits that "if we could accept without misgiving the testimony of the eight witnesses brought forward in Howe's book, we should be obliged to accept the fact of another manuscript" (than the one which President Fairchild secured); but he thinks there is some doubt about the effect on the memory of these witnesses of the lapse of years and the reading of the new

¹ Fuller extracts from the testimony of these later witnesses will be found in Robert Patterson's pamphlet, "Who wrote the Book of Mormon," reprinted from the "History of Washington County, Pa."

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Bible before they recalled the original story. It must be remembered, however, that this resemblance was recalled as soon as they heard the story of the new Bible, and there seems no ground on which to trace a theory that it was the Bible which originated in their minds the story ascribed to the manuscript.

The defenders of the Mormon Bible as an original work received great comfort some fifteen years ago by the announcement that the original manuscript of Spaulding's "Manuscript Found" had been discovered in the Sandwich Islands and brought to this country, and that its narrative bore no resemblance to the Bible story. The history of this second manuscript is as follows: E. D. Howe sold his printing establishment at Painesville, Ohio, to L. L. Rice, who was an anti-slavery editor there for many years. Mr. Rice afterward moved to the Sandwich Islands, and there he was requested by President Fairchild to look over his old papers to see if he could not find some anti-slavery matter that would be of value to the Oberlin College library. One result of his search was an old manuscript bearing the following certificate: --

"The writings of Solomon Spaulding, proved by Aaron Wright, Oliver Smith, John N. Miller and others. The testimonies of the above gentlemen are now in my possession.

"D. P. HURLBUT."

President Fairchild in a paper on this subject which has been published¹ gives a description of this manuscript (it has been printed by the Reorganized Church at Lamoni, Iowa), which shows that it bears no resemblance to the Bible story. But the assumption that this proves that the Bible story is original fails immediately in view of the fact that Mr. Howe made

no concealment of his possession of this second manuscript. Hurlbut was in Howe's service when he asked Mrs. Davison for an order for the manuscript, and he gave to Howe, as the result of his visit, *the manuscript which Rice gave to President Fairchild*. Howe in his book (p. 288) describes this manuscript substantially as does President Fairchild, saying: --

"This is a romance, purporting to have been translated from the Latin, found on twenty-four rolls of parchment in a cave on the banks of Conneaut Creek, but written in a modern style, and giving a fabulous account of a ship's being driven

¹ "Manuscript of Solomon Spaulding and the 'Book of Mormon,'" Tract No. 77, Western Reserve Historical Society, Cleveland, Ohio.

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upon the American coast, while proceeding from Rome to Britain, a short time previous to the Christian era, this country then being inhabited by the Indians."¹

Mr. Howe adds this important statement: --

"This old manuscript has been shown to several of the foregoing witnesses, who recognize it as Spaulding's, he having told them that he had altered his first plan of writing, by going further back with dates, and writing in the old scripture style, in order that it might appear more ancient. They say that it bears no resemblance to the 'Manuscript Found.'"

If Howe had considered this manuscript of the least importance as invalidating the testimony showing the resemblance between the "Manuscript Found" and the Mormon Bible, he would have destroyed it (if he was the malignant falsifier the Mormons represented him to be), and not have first described it in his book, and then left it to be found by any future owner of his effects. Its rediscovery has been accepted, however,

even by some non-Mormons, as proof that the Mormon Bible is an original production.²

Mrs. Ellen E. Dickenson, a great-niece of Spaulding, who has painstakingly investigated the history of the much-discussed manuscript, visited D. P. Hurlbut at his home near Gibsonburg, Ohio, in 1880 (he died in 1882), taking with her Oscar Kellogg, a lawyer, as a witness to the interview.³ She says that her visit excited him greatly. He told of getting a manuscript for Mr. Howe at Hartwick, and said he thought it was burned with other of Mr. Howe's papers. When asked, "Was it Spaulding's manuscript that was burned?" he replied: "Mrs. Davison thought it was; but when I just peeked into it, here and there, and saw the names Mormon, Moroni, Lamanite, Lephi, I thought it was all nonsense. Why, if it had been the real one, I could have sold it for \$3000;⁴ but I just gave it to Howe because it was of no account." During the interview his wife was present, and when Mrs. Dickenson pressed him

¹ Howe says in his book, "The fact that Spaulding in the latter part of his life inclined to infidelity is established by a letter in his handwriting now in our possession." This letter was given by Rice with the other manuscript to President Fairchild (who reproduces it), thus adding to the proof that the Rice manuscript is the one Hurlbut delivered to Howe.

² Preface to "The Mormon Prophet," Lily Dugall.

³ A full account of this interview is given in her book, "New Light on Mormonism " (1885).

⁴ There have been surmises that Hurlbut also found the "Manuscript Found" in the trunk and sold this to the Mormons. He sent a specific denial of this charge to Robert Patterson in 1879.

with the question, "Do you know where the 'Manuscript Found' is at the present time?" Mrs.

Hurlbut went up to him and said, "Tell her what you know." She got no satisfactory answer, but he afterward forwarded to her an affidavit saying that he had obtained of Mrs. Davison a manuscript supposing it to be Spaulding's "Manuscript Found," adding: "I did not examine the manuscript until after I got home, when upon examination I found it to contain nothing of the kind, but being a manuscript upon an entirely different subject. This manuscript I left with E. D. Howe."

With this presentation of the evidence showing the similarity between Spaulding's story and the Mormon Bible narrative, we may next examine the grounds for believing that Sidney Rigdon was connected with the production of the Bible.

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CHAPTER VIII

SIDNEY RIGDON

The man who had more to do with founding the Mormon church than Joseph Smith, Jr., even if we exclude any share in the production of the Mormon Bible, and yet who is unknown even by name to most persons to whom the names of Joseph Smith and Brigham Young are familiar, was Sidney Rigdon. Elder John Hyde, Jr., was well within the truth when he wrote: "The compiling genius of Mormonism was Sidney Rigdon. Smith had boisterous impetuosity but no foresight. Polygamy was not the result of his policy but of his passions. Sidney gave point, direction, and apparent consistency to the Mormon system of theology. He invented its forms and the manner of its arguments. Had it not been for the accession of these two men {Rigdon and Parley P. Pratt} Smith would have been lost, and his schemes frustrated and abandoned."¹

Rigdon (according to the sketch of him presented in Smith's autobiography,² which he doubtless wrote) was born in St. Clair township, Allegheny County, Pennsylvania, on February 19, 1793. His father was a farmer, and he lived on the farm, receiving only a limited education, until he was twenty-six years old. He then connected himself with the Baptist church, and received a license to preach. Selecting Ohio as his field, he continued his work in rural districts in that state until 1821, when he accepted a call to a small Baptist church in Pittsburg. Twenty years before the publication of the Mormon Bible, Thomas and Alexander Campbell, Scotchmen, had founded a

¹ "Mormonism: Its Leaders and Designs" (1857) Hyde, an Englishman, joined the Mormons in that country when a lad and began to preach almost at once. He sailed for this country in 1853 and joined the brethren in Salt Lake City. Brigham Young's rule upset his faith, and he abandoned the belief in 1854. Even H. H. Bancroft concedes him to have been "an able and honest man, sober and sincere."

² *Millennial Star*, Vol. XIV, Supt.

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congregation in Washington County, Pennsylvania, out of which grew the religious denomination known as Disciples of Christ, or Campbellites, whose communicants in the United States numbered 871,017 in the year 1890. The fundamental principle of their teaching was that every doctrine of belief, or maxim of duty, must rest upon the authority of Scripture, expressed or implied, all human creeds being rejected. The Campbells (who had been first Presbyterians and then Baptists) were wonderful orators and convincing debaters out of the pulpit, and they drew to themselves many of the most eloquent exhorters in what was then the western border of the United States. Among their allies was another Scotchman, Walter Scott, a musician and school-teacher by profession, who assisted them in their newspaper work and became a noted evangelist in their denomination. During a visit to Pittsburg in 1823, Scott made Rigdon's acquaintance, and a little later the flocks to which each preached were united. In August, 1824, Rigdon announced his withdrawal from his church. Regarding his withdrawal the sketch in Smith's autobiography says: --

"After he had been in that place (Pittsburg) some time, his mind was troubled and much perplexed with the idea that the doctrines maintained by that society were not altogether in accordance with the Scriptures. This thing continued to agitate his mind more and more, and his reflections on these occasions were particularly trying; for, according to his view of the word of God, no other church with whom he could associate, or that he was acquainted with, was right; consequently, if he was to disavow the doctrine of the church with whom he was then associated, he knew of no other way of obtaining a living, except by manual labor, and at that time he had a wife and three children to support."

For two years after he gave up his church connection he worked as a journeyman tanner. This is all the information obtainable about this part of his life. We

next find him preaching at Bainbridge, Ohio, as an undenominational exhorter, but following the general views of the Campbells, advising his hearers to reject their creeds and rest their belief solely on the Bible.

In June, 1826, Rigdon received a call to a Baptist church at Mentor, Ohio, whose congregation he had pleased when he preached the funeral sermon of his predecessor. His labors were not confined, however, to this congregation. We find him acting as the "stated" minister of a Disciples' church organized at Mantua, Ohio, in 1827, preaching with Thomas Campbell at Shalersville,

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Ohio, in 1828, and thus extending the influence he had acquired as early as 1820, when Alexander Campbell called him "the great orator of the Mahoning Association." In 1828 he visited his old associate Scott, was further confirmed in his faith in the Disciples' belief, and, taking his brother-in-law Bentley back with him, they began revival work at Mentor, which led to the conversion of more than fifty of their hearers. They held services at Kirtland, Ohio, with equal success, and the story of this awakening was the main subject of discussion in all the neighborhood round about. The sketch of Rigdon in Smith's autobiography closes with this tribute to his power as a preacher: "The churches where he preached were no longer large enough to contain the vast assemblies. No longer did he follow the old beaten track,... but dared to enter on new grounds,... threw new light on the sacred volume, proved to a demonstration the literal fulfillment of prophecy and the reign of Christ with his Saints on the earth in the Millennium."

In tracing Rigdon's connection with Smith's enterprise,

attention must be carefully paid both to Rigdon's personal characteristics, and to the resemblance between the doctrines he had taught in the pulpit and those that appear in the Mormon Bible.

Rigdon's mental and religious temperament was just of the character to be attracted by a novelty in religious belief. He, with his brother-in-law, Adamson Bentley, visited Alexander Campbell in 1821, and spent a whole night in religious discussion. When they parted the next day, Rigdon declared that "if he had within the last year promulgated one error, he had a thousand," and Mr. Campbell, in his account of the interview, remarked, "I found it expedient to caution them not to begin to pull down anything they had builded until they had reviewed, again and again, what they had heard; not even then rashly and without much consideration."¹

A leading member of the church at Mantua has written, "Sidney Rigdon preached for us, and, notwithstanding his extravagantly wild freaks, he was held in high repute by many."²

An important church discussion occurred at Warren, Ohio, in

¹ *Millennial Harbinger*, 1848, p. 523.

² "Early History of the Disciples' Church in the Western Reserve," by A. S. Hayden (1876), p. 239.

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1828. Following out the idea of the literal interpretation of the Scriptures taught in the Disciples' church, Rigdon sprung on the meeting an argument in favor of a community of goods, holding that the apostles established this system at Jerusalem, and that

the modern church, which rested on their example, must follow them. Alexander Campbell, who was present, at once controverted this position, showing that the apostles, as narrated in Acts, "sold their possessions" instead of combining them for a profit, and citing Bible texts to prove that no "community system" existed in the early church. This argument carried the meeting, and Rigdon left the assemblage, embittered against Campbell beyond forgiveness. To a brother in Warren, on his way home, he declared, "I have done as much in this reformation as Campbell or Scott, and yet they get all the honor of it." This claim is set forth specifically in the sketch of Rigdon in Smith's autobiography. Referring to Rigdon and Alexander Campbell, this statement is there made: --

"After they had separated from the different churches, these gentlemen were on terms of the greatest friendship, and frequently met together to discuss the subject of religion, being yet undetermined respecting the principles of the doctrine of Christ or what course to pursue: However, *from this connection* sprung up a new church in the world, known by the name of 'Campbellites'; they call themselves 'Disciples.' The reason why they were called Campbellites was in consequence of Mr. Campbell's periodical, above mentioned (the *Christian Baptist*), and it being the means through which they communicated their sentiments to the world; other than this, Mr. Campbell was no more the originator of the sect than Elder Rigdon."

Rigdon's bitterness against the Campbells and his old church more than once manifested itself in his later writings. For instance, in an article in the *Messenger and Advocate* (Kirtland), of June, 1837, he said: "One thing has been done by the coming forth of the Book of Mormon. It has puked the Campbellites effectually; no emetic could have done so half as well.... The Book of Mormon has revealed the secrets of Campbellism and unfolded the end of the system." In this jealousy of the Campbells, and the discomfiture as a leader which he received at their hands, we find a sufficient object for Rigdon's desertion of his old church associations and desire to build up something, the discovery of which he could claim, and the

government of which he could control.

To understand the strength of the argument that the doctrinal

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teachings of the Mormon Bible were the work of a Disciples' preacher rather than of the ne'er-do-well Smith, it is only necessary to examine the teachings of the Disciples' church in Ohio at that time. The investigator will be startled by the resemblance between what was then taught to and believed by Disciples' congregations and the leading beliefs of the Mormon Bible. In the following examples of this the illustrations of Disciples' beliefs and teachings are taken from Hayden's "Early History of the Disciples' Church in the Western Reserve."

The literal interpretation of the Scriptures, on which the Mormon defenders of their faith so largely depend, -- as for explanations of modern revelations, miracles, and signs, -- was preached to so extreme a point by Ohio Disciples that Alexander Campbell had to combat them in his *Millennial Harbinger*. An outcome of this literal interpretation was a belief in a speedy millennium, another fundamental belief of the early Mormon church. "The hope of the millennial glory," says Hayden, "was based on many passages of the Holy Scriptures.... Millennial hymns were learned and sung with a joyful fervor.... It is surprising, even now, as memory returns to gather up these interesting remains of that mighty work, to recall the thorough and extensive knowledge which the convert quickly obtained. Nebuchadnezzar's vision... many portions of the Revelation were so thoroughly studied that they became the staple of the common talk." Rigdon's old Pittsburg friend, Scott, in his report as evangelist to the church association at Warren in 1828, Said:

"Individuals eminently skilled in the word of God, the history of the world, and the progress of human improvements see reasons to expect great changes, much greater than have yet occurred, and which shall give to political society and to the church a different, a very different, complexion from what many anticipate. The millennium -- the millennium described in the Scriptures -- will doubtless be a wonder, a terrible wonder, to *all*."

Disciples' preachers understood that they spoke directly for God, just as Smith assumed to do in his "revelations." Referring to the preaching of Rigdon and Bentley, after a visit to Scott in March, 1828, Hayden says, "They spoke with authority, for the word which they delivered was not theirs, but that of Jesus Christ." The Disciples, like the Mormons, at that time looked for the return

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of the Jews to Jerusalem. Scott¹ was an enthusiastic preacher of this. "The fourteenth chapter of Zechariah," says Hayden, "was brought forward in proof -- all considered as literal -- that the most marvellous and stupendous physical and climatic changes were to be wrought in Palestine; and that Jesus Christ the Messiah was to reign literally in Jerusalem, and in Mount Zion, and before his ancients, gloriously."

Campbell taught that "creeds are but statements, with few exceptions, of doctrinal opinion or speculators' views of philosophical or dogmatic subjects, and tended to confusion, disunion, and weakness." Orson Pratt, in his "Divine Authenticity of the Book of Mormon," thus stated the early Mormon view on the same subject: "If any man or council, without the aid of immediate revelation, shall undertake to decide

upon such subjects, and prescribe 'articles of faith' or 'creeds' to govern the belief or views of others, there will be thousands of well-meaning people who will not have confidence in the productions of these fallible men, and, therefore, frame creeds of their own. . . . In this way contentions arise."

Finally, attention may be directed to the emphatic declarations of the Disciples' doctrine of baptism in the Mormon Bible: --

"Ye shall go down and stand in the water, and in my name shall ye baptize them . . . And then shall ye immerse them in the water, and come forth again out of the water." -- 3 Nephi xi. 23, 26.

"I know that it is solemn mockery before God that ye should baptize little children. . . . He that supposeth that little children need baptism is in the gall of bitterness and in the bond of iniquity; for he hath neither faith, hope, nor charity; wherefore, should he be cut off while in the thought, he must go down to hell. For awful is the wickedness to suppose that God saveth one child because of baptism, and the other must perish because he hath no baptism." -- Moroni viii. 9, 14, 15.

There are but three conclusions possible from all this: that the Mormon Bible was a work of inspiration, and that the agreement

¹ "In a letter to Dr. Richardson, written in 1830, he {Scott} says the book of Elias Smith on the prophecies is the only sensible work on that subject he had seen. He thinks this and Crowley on the Apocalypse all the student of the Bible wants. He strongly commends Smith's book to the doctor. This seems to be the origin of millennial views among us. Rigdon, who always caught and proclaimed the last word that fell from the lips of Scott or Campbell, seized these views (about the millennium and the Jews) and, with the wildness of his extravagant nature, heralded them everywhere." -- "Early History of the Disciples' Church in the Western Reserve," p. 186.

of its doctrines with Disciples' belief only proves the correctness of the latter; that Smith, in writing his doctrinal views, hit on the Disciples' tenets by chance (he had had no opportunity whatever to study them); or, finally, that some Disciple, learned in the church, supplied these doctrines to him.

Advancing another step in the examination of Rigdon's connection with the scheme, we find that even the idea of a *new Bible* was common belief among the Ohio Disciples who listened to Scott's teaching. Describing Scott's preaching in the winter of 1827-1828, Hayden says: --

"He contended ably for the restoration of the true, original apostolic order which would restore to the church the ancient gospel as preached by the apostles. The interest became an excitement;... the air was thick with rumors of a 'new religion,' a 'new Bible.'"

Next we may cite two witnesses to show that Rigdon had a knowledge of Smith's Bible in advance of its publication. His brother-in-law, Bentley, in a letter to Waiter Scott dated January 22, 1841, said, "I know that Sidney Rigdon told me there was a book coming out, the manuscript of which had been found engraved on gold plates, as much as two years before the Mormon book made its appearance or had been heard of by me."¹

One of the elders of the Disciples' church was Darwin Atwater, a farmer, who afterward occupied the pulpit, and of whom Hayden says, "The uniformity of his life, his undeviating devotion, his high and consistent manliness and superiority of judgment, gave him an undisputed preeminence in the church." In a letter to Hayden, dated April 26, 1873, Mr. Atwater said of Rigdon: --

"For a few months before his professed conversion to Mormonism it was noticed that his wild extravagant propensities had been more marked. That he knew before the coming of the

Book of Mormon is to me certain from what he said during the first of his visits at my father's, some years before. He gave a wonderful description of the mounds and other antiquities found in some parts of America, and said that they must have been made by the aborigines. He said there was a book to be published containing an account of those things. He spoke of these in his eloquent, enthusiastic style, as being a thing most

¹ *Millennial Harbinger*, 1844, p. 39. The Rev. Alexander Campbell testified that this conversation took place in his presence.

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extraordinary. Though a youth then, I took him to task for expending so much enthusiasm on such a subject instead of things of the Gospel. In all my intercourse with him afterward he never spoke of antiquities, or of the wonderful book that should give account of them, till the Book of Mormon really was published. He must have thought I was not the man to reveal that to."¹

Dr. Storm Rosa, a leading physician of Ohio, in a letter to the Rev. John Hall of Ashtabula, written in 1841, said: "In the early part of the year 1830 I was in company with Sidney Rigdon, and rode with him on horseback for a few miles.... He remarked to me that it was time for a new religion to spring up; that mankind were all right and ready for it."²

Having thus established the identity of the story running through the Spaulding manuscript and the historical part of the Mormon Bible, the agreement of the doctrinal part of the latter with what was taught at the time by Rigdon and his fellow-workers in Ohio, and Rigdon's previous knowledge of the coming book, we are brought to the query, How did the Spaulding manuscript become incorporated in the Mormon Bible?

It could have been so incorporated in two ways: either

by coming into the possession of Rigdon and being by him copied and placed in Smith's hands for "translation," with the theological parts added;³ or by coming into possession of Smith in his wanderings around the neighborhood of Hartwick, and being shown by him to Rigdon. Every aspect of this matter has been discussed by Mormon and non-Mormon writers, and it can only be said that definite proof is lacking. Mormon disputants set forth that Spaulding moved from Pittsburg to Amity in 1814, and that Rigdon's first visit to Pittsburg occurred in 1822. On the other hand, evidence is offered that Rigdon was a "hanger around " Patterson's printing-office, where Spaulding offered his manuscript, before the year 1816, and the Rev. John Winter, M.D., who taught school in Pittsburg when Rigdon preached there, and knew him well, recalled that Rigdon showed him a large manuscript which

¹ "Early History of the Disciples' Church in the Western Reserve," p. 239.

² "Gleanings by the Way," p. 315.

³ "Rigdon has not been in full fellowship with Smith for more than a year. He has been in his turn cast aside by Joe to make room for some new dupe or knave who, perhaps, has come with more money. He has never been deceived by Joe. I have no doubt that Rigdon was the originator of the system, and, fearing for its success, put Joe forward as a sort of fool in the play." -- Letter from a resident near Nauvoo, quoted in the postscript to Caswall's " City of the Mormons " (1843).

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he said a Presbyterian minister named Spaulding had brought to the city for publication. Dr. Winter's daughter wrote to Robert Patterson on April 5, 1881: "I have frequently heard my father speak of Rigdon having Spaulding's manuscript, and that he had gotten it from the printers to read it as a curiosity; as such he

showed it to father, and at that time Rigdon had no intention of making the use of it that he afterward did."¹ Mrs. Ellen E. Dickenson, in a report of a talk with General and Mrs. Garfield on the subject at Mentor, Ohio, in 1880, reports Mrs. Garfield as saying " that her father told her that Rigdon in his youth lived in that neighborhood, and made mysterious journeys to Pittsburg."² She also quotes a statement by Mrs. Garfield's father, Z. Rudolph, "that during the winter previous to the appearance of the Book of Mormon, Rigdon was in the habit of spending weeks away from his home, going no one knew where."³ Tucker says that in the summer of 1827 "a mysterious stranger appears at Smith's residence, and holds private interviews with the far-famed money-digger.... It was observed by some of Smith's nearest neighbors that his visits were frequently repeated." Again, when the persons interested in the publication of the Bible were so alarmed by the abstraction of pages of the translation by Mrs. Harris, "the reappearance of the mysterious stranger at Smith's was," he says, "the subject of inquiry and conjecture by observers from whom was withheld all explanation of his identity or purpose."⁴

In a historical inquiry of this kind, it is more important establish the fact that a certain thing *was done* than to prove just *how* or *when* it was done. The entire narrative of the steps leading up to the announcement of a new Bible, including Smith's first introduction to the use of a "peek-stone" and his original employment of it, the changes made in the original version of the announcement to him of buried plates, and the final production of a book, partly historical and partly theological, shows that there was behind Smith some directing mind, and the only one of his associates in the first few years of the church's history who could have done the work required was Sidney Rigdon.

¹ For a collection of evidence on this subject, see Patterson's "Who Wrote the Mormon Bible?"

² *Scribner's Magazine*, October, 1881.

³ "New Light an Mormonism," p. 252.

⁴ "Origin, Rise, and Progress of Mormonism," pp. 28, 46.

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President Fairchild, in his paper on the Spaulding manuscript already referred to, while admitting that "it is perhaps impossible at this day to prove or disprove the Spaulding theory," finds an argument against the assumption that Rigdon supplied the doctrinal part of the new Bible, in the view that "a man as self-reliant and smart as Rigdon, with a superabundant gift of tongue and every form of utterance, would never have accepted the servile task" of mere interpolation; "there could have been no motive to it." This only shows that President Fairchild wrote without knowledge of the whole subject, with ignorance of the motives which did exist for Rigdon's conduct, and without means of acquainting himself with Rigdon's history during his association with Smith. Some of his motives we have already ascertained. We shall find that, almost from the beginning of their removal to j Ohio, Smith held him in a subjection which can be explained only on the theory that Rigdon, the prominent churchman, had placed himself completely in the power of the unprincipled Smith, and that, instead of exhibiting self-reliance, he accepted insult after insult until, just before Smith's death, he was practically without influence in the church; and when the time came to elect Smith's successor, he was turned out of doors by Brigham Young with the taunting words, " Brother Sidney says he will tell our secrets, but I would say, 'O don't, Brother Sidney! Don't tell our secrets -- O don't.' But if he tells our secrets we will tell his. Tit for tat!" President Fairchild's argument that "several of the original leaders of the fanaticism must have been

adequate to the task" of supplying the doctrinal part of the book, only furnishes additional proof of his ignorance of early Mormon history, and his further assumption that "it is difficult -- almost impossible -- to believe that the religious sentiments of the Book of Mormon were wrought into interpolation" brings him into direct conflict, as we shall see, with Professor Whitsitt,¹ a much better equipped student of the subject.

If it should be questioned whether a man of Rigdon's church connection would deliberately plan such a fraudulent scheme as the production of the Mormon Bible, the inquiry may be easily satisfied. One of the first tasks which Smith and Rigdon undertook, as soon as Rigdon openly joined Smith in New York State,

¹ *Post*, [pp. 92, 93.](#)

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was the preparation of what they called a new translation of the Scriptures. This work was undertaken in conformity with a "revelation" to Smith and Rigdon, dated December, 1830 (Sec. 35, "Doctrine and Covenants") in which Sidney was told, "And a commandment I give unto thee, that thou shalt write for him; and the Scriptures shall be given, even as they are in mine own bosom, to the salvation of mine own elect." The "translating" was completed in Ohio, and the manuscript, according to Smith, "was sealed up, no more to be opened till it arrived in Zion."¹ This work was at first kept as a great secret, and Smith and Rigdon moved to the house of a resident of Hiram township, Portage County, Ohio, thirty miles from Kirtland, in September, 1831, to carry it on; but the secret soon got out. The preface to the edition of the book published at Plano, Illinois, in

1867, under the title, "The Holy Scriptures translated and corrected by the Spirit of Revelation, by Joseph Smith, Jr., the Seer," says that the manuscript remained in the hands of the prophet's widow from the time of his death until 1866, when it was delivered to a committee of the Reorganized Mormon conference for publication. Some of its chapters were known to Mormon readers earlier, since Corrill gives the twenty-fourth chapter of Matthew in his historical sketch, which was dated 1839.

The professed object of the translation was to restore the Scriptures to their original purity and beauty, the Mormon Bible declaring that "many plain and precious parts" had been taken from them. The real object, however, was to add to the sacred writings a prediction of Joseph Smith's coming as a prophet, which would increase his authority and support the pretensions of the new Bible. That this was Rigdon's scheme is apparent from the fact that it was announced as soon as he visited Smith, and was carried on under his direction, and that the manuscript translation was all in his handwriting.²

Extended parts of the translation do not differ at all from the King James version, and many of the changes are verbal and inconsequential. Rigdon's object appears in the changes made in the fiftieth chapter of Genesis, and the twenty-ninth chapter of Isaiah. In the King James version the fiftieth chapter of Genesis contains twenty-six verses, and ends with the words, " So Joseph

¹ *Millennial Star*, Vol. XIV, p. 361.

² Wyl's "Mormon Portraits," p. 124.

died, being an hundred and ten years old; and they embalmed him, and he was put in a coffin in Egypt." In the Smith-Rigdon version this chapter contains thirty-eight verses, the addition representing Joseph as telling his brethren that a branch of his people shall be carried into a far country and that a seer shall be given to them, "and that seer will I bless, and they that seek to destroy him shall be confounded; for this promise I give unto you; for I will remember you from generation to generation; and his name shall be called Joseph. And he shall have judgment, and shall write the word of I the Lord."

The twenty-ninth chapter of Isaiah is similarly expanded from twenty-four short to thirty-two long verses. Verses eleven and twelve of the King James version read: --

"And the vision of all is become unto you as the words of a book that is ; sealed, which men deliver to one that is learned, saying, Read this, I pray thee: and he saith, I cannot; for it is sealed:"

"And the book is delivered to him that is not learned, saying, Read this, I pray thee: and he saith, I am not learned."

The Smith-Rigdon version expands this as follows: --

"11. And it shall come to pass, that the Lord God shall bring forth unto you the words of a book; and they shall be the words of them which have slumbered."

"12. And behold, the book shall be sealed; and in the book shall be a revelation from God, from the beginning of the world to the ending thereof.

"13. Wherefore, because of the things which are sealed up, the things which are sealed shall not be delivered in the day of the wickedness and abominations of the people. Wherefore, the book shall he kept from them.

"14. But the book shall be delivered unto a man, and he shall deliver the words of the book, which are the words of those who have slumbered in the dust; and he shall deliver these words unto another, but the words that are sealed he shall not deliver, neither shall he deliver the book.

"5. For the book shall be sealed by the power of God, and the revelation which was sealed shall be kept in the book until the own due time of the Lord, that they may come forth; for, behold, they reveal all things from the foundation of the world unto the end thereof."

No one will question that a Rigdon who would palm off such a fraudulent work as this upon the men who looked to him as a religious teacher would hesitate to suggest to Smith the scheme for a new Bible. During the work of translation, as we learn from Smith's autobiography, the translators saw a wonderful vision, in which they "beheld the glory of the Son on the right hand of the

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Father," and holy angels, and the glory of the worlds, terrestrial and celestial. Soon after this they received an explanation from heaven of some obscure texts in Revelation. Thus, the sea of glass (iv. 6) "is the earth in its sanctified, immortal, and eternal state"; by the little book which was eaten by John (chapter x) "we are to understand that it was a mission and an ordinance for him to gather the tribes of Israel."

It may be added that this translation is discarded by the modern Mormon church in Utah. *The Deseret Evening News*, the church organ at Salt Lake City, said on February 21, 1900: --

"The translation of the Bible, referred to by our correspondents, has not been adopted by this church as authoritative. It is understood that the Prophet Joseph intended before its publication to subject the manuscript to an entire examination, for such revision as might be deemed necessary. Be that as it may, the work has not been published under the auspices of this church, and is, therefore, not held out as a guide. For the present, the version of the scriptures commonly known as King James's translation is used, and the living oracles are the expounders of

the written word."

We may anticipate the course of our narrative in order to show how much confirmation of Rigdon's connection with the whole Mormon scheme is furnished by the circumstances attending the first open announcement of his acceptance of the Mormon literature and faith. We are first introduced to Parley P. Pratt, sometime tin peddler, and a lay preacher to rural congregations in Ohio when occasion offered. Pratt in his autobiography tells of the joy with which he heard Rigdon preach, at his home in Ohio, doctrines of repentance and baptism which were the "ancient gospel" that he (Pratt) had "discovered years before, but could find no one to minister in"; of a society for worship which he and others organized; of his decision, acting under the influence of the Gospel and prophecies "as they had been opened to him," to abandon the home he had built up, and to set out on a mission "for the Gospel's sake"; and of a trip to New York State, where he was shown the Mormon Bible. "As I read," he says, "the spirit of the Lord was upon me, and I knew and comprehended that the book was true."

Pratt was at once commissioned, "by revelation and the laying on of hands," to preach the new Gospel, and was sent, also by "revelation" (Sec. 32, "Doctrine and Covenants"), along with

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Cowdery, Z. Peterson, and Peter Whitmer, Jr., "into the wilderness among the Lamanites." Pratt and Cowdery went direct to Rigdon's house in Mentor, where they stayed a week. Pratt's own account says: "We called on Mr. Rigdon, my former friend and instructor in the Reformed Baptist Society. He received us cordially, and entertained us with

hospitality."¹

In Smith's autobiography it is stated that Rigdon's visitors presented the Mormon Bible to him as a revelation from God, and what followed is thus described: --

"This being the first time he had ever heard of or seen the Book of Mormon, he felt very much prejudiced at the assertion, and replied that 'he had one Bible which he believed was a revelation from God, and with which he pretended to have some acquaintance; but with respect to the book they had presented him, he must say *he had considerable doubt.*' Upon which they expressed a desire to investigate the subject and argue the matter; but he replied, 'No, young gentlemen, you must not argue with me on the subject. But I will read your book, and see what claim it has upon my faith, and will endeavor to ascertain whether it be a revelation from God or not.' After some further conversation on the subject, they expressed a desire to lay the subject before the people, and requested the privilege of preaching in Elder Rigdon's church, *to which he readily consented.* The appointment was accordingly published, and a large and respectable congregation assembled. Oliver Cowdery and Parley P. Pratt severally addressed the meeting. At the conclusion Elder Rigdon arose and stated to the congregation that the information they that evening had received was of an extraordinary character, and certainly demanded their most serious consideration; and, as the apostle advised his brethren to prove all things and hold fast that which is good,' so he would exhort his brethren to do likewise, and give the matter a careful investigation, and *not turn against it, without being fully convinced of its being an imposition, lest they should possibly resist the truth.*"²

Accepting this as a correct report of what occurred (and we may consider it from Rigdon's pen), we find a clergyman who was a fellow-worker with men like Campbell and Scott expressing only "considerable doubt" of the inspiration of a book presented to him as a new Bible, "readily consenting" to the use of his church by the sponsors for this book, and, at the close of their arguments, warning his people against rejecting it too readily "lest they resist the truth"! Unless all these are misstatements, there seems to be little necessity of further proof that Rigdon was

prepared in advance for the reception of the Mormon Bible.

¹ "Autobiography of P. P. Pratt," p. 49.

² *Millennial Star*, Vol. XIV, p. 47.

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After this came the announcement of the conversion and baptism by the Mormon missionaries of a "family" of seventeen persons living in some sort of a "community" system, between Mentor and Kirtland. Rigdon, who had merely explained to his neighbors that his visitors were "on a curious mission," expressed disapproval of this at first, and took Cowdery to task for asserting that his own conversion to the new belief was due to a visit from an angel. But, two days later, Rigdon himself received an angel's visit, and the next Sunday, with his wife, was baptized into the new faith.

Rigdon, of course, had to answer many inquiries on his return to Ohio from a visit to Smith which soon followed his conversion, but his policy was indignant reticence whenever pressed to any decisive point. To an old acquaintance who, after talking the matter over with him at his house, remarked that the Koran of Mohammed stood on as good evidence as the Bible of Smith, Rigdon replied: "Sir, you have insulted me in my own house. I command silence. If people come to see us and cannot treat us civilly, they can walk out of the door as soon as they please."¹ Thomas Campbell sent a long letter to Rigdon under date of February 4, 1831, in which he addressed him as "for many years not only a courteous and benevolent friend, but a beloved brother and fellow-laborer in the Gospel -- but alas! how changed, how fallen." Accepting a recent offer of Rigdon in one of his sermons to give his reasons for his new belief, Mr. Campbell offered to

meet him in public discussion, even outlining the argument he would offer, under nine headings, that Rigdon might be prepared to refute it, proposing to take his stand on the sufficiency of the Holy Scriptures, Smith's bad character, the absurdities of the Mormon Bible and of the alleged miraculous "gifts," and the objections to the "common property" plan and the re-baptizing of believers. Rigdon, after glancing over a few lines of this letter, threw it into the fire unanswered.²

¹ "Mormonism Unveiled," p. 112.

² *Ibid.*, p. 116-123.

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CHAPTER IX

"THE EVERLASTING GOSPEL"

Having presented the evidence which shows that the historical part of the Mormon Bible was supplied by the Spaulding manuscript, we may now pay attention to other evidence, which indicates that the entire conception of a revelation of golden plates by an angel was not even original, and also that its suggester was Rigdon. This is a subject which has been overlooked

by investigators of the Mormon Bible.

That the idea of the revelation as described by Smith in his autobiography was not original is shown by the fact that **a similar divine message, engraved on plates, was announced to have been received from an angel** nearly six hundred years before the alleged visit of an angel to Smith. These original plates were described as of copper, and the recipient was a monk named Cyril, from whom their contents passed into the possession of the Abbot Joachim, whose "Everlasting Gospel," founded thereon, was offered to the church as supplanting the New Testament, just as the New Testament had supplanted the Old, and caused so serious a schism that Pope Alexander IV took the severest measures against it.¹

The evidence that the history of the "Everlasting Gospel" of the thirteenth century supplied the idea of the Mormon Bible lies not only in the resemblance between the celestial announcement of both, but in the fact that both were declared to have the same important purport -- as a forerunner of the end of the world.-- and that the name "Everlasting Gospel" was adopted and constantly used in connection with their message by the original leaders in the Mormon church.

¹ [John W.] Draper's "Intellectual Development of Europe," [Vol. II, Chap. III](#). For an exhaustive essay on the "Everlasting Gospel," by Renan, see *Revue des Deux Mondes*, June, 1866. For John of Parma's part in the Gospel, see "Histoire Litteraire de la France" (1842), Vol. XX, p. 24.

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If it is asked, **How could Rigdon become acquainted with the story of the original "Everlasting Gospel,"** the answer is that it was just such subjects that would most attract his attention, and that his studies had led him

into directions where the story of Cyril's plates would probably have been mentioned. He was a student of every subject out of which he could evolve a sect, from the time of his Pittsburg pastorate. Hepworth Dixon said, "He knew the writings of Maham, Gates, and Boyle, writings in which love and marriage are considered in relation to Gospel liberty and the future life."¹ H. H. Bancroft, noting his appointment as Professor of Church History in Nauvoo University, speaks of him as "versed in history, belles-lettres, and oratory."² Mrs. James A. Garfield told Mrs. Dickenson that Rigdon taught her father Latin and Greek.³ David Whitmer, who was intimately acquainted with the early history of the church, testified: "Rigdon was a thorough biblical scholar, a man of fine education and a powerful orator."⁴ A writer, describing Rigdon while the church was at Nauvoo, said, "There is no divine in the West more learned in biblical literature and the history of the world than he."⁵ **All this indicates that a knowledge of the earlier "Everlasting Gospel" was easily within Rigdon's reach. We may even surmise the exact source of this knowledge. Mosheim's ["Ecclesiastical History, Ancient and Modern"](#) was at his disposal.** Editions of it had appeared in London in 1765, 1768, 1774, 1782, 1790, 1806, 1814 and 1826, and among the abridgments was one published in Philadelphia in 1812. In this work he could have read as follows: --

"About the commencement of this (the thirteenth) century there were handed about in Italy several pretended prophecies of the famous Joachim, abbot of Sora in Calabria, whom the multitude revered as a person divinely inspired, and equal to the most illustrious prophets of ancient times. The greatest part of these predictions were contained in a certain book entitled, 'The Everlasting Gospel,' which was also commonly called the Book of Joachim. This Joachim, whether a real or fictitious person we shall not pretend to determine, among many other events, foretold the destruction of the Church of Rome, whose corruptions he censured with the greatest severity, and the promulgation of a new and more perfect gospel in the age of the Holy Ghost, by a set of poor and austere ministers, whom God was to raise up and

employ for that purpose."

¹ "Spiritual Wives," p. 62.

² "Utah," p. 146.

³ *Scribner's Magazine*, October, 1881.

⁴ "Address to All Believers in Christ," p. 35.

⁵ Letter in the *New York Herald*.

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Here is a perfect outline of the scheme presented by the original Mormons, with Joseph as the divinely inspired prophet, and an "Everlasting Gospel," the gift of an angel, promulgated by poor men like the travelling Mormon elders. The original suggestion of an "Everlasting Gospel" is found in Revelation xiv, 6 and 7: --

"And I saw another angel fly in the midst of heaven, having the everlasting in gospel to preach unto them that dwell on the earth, and to every nation, and kindred, and tongue, and people,

"Saying with a loud voice, Fear God, and give glory to him; for the hour of his judgment is come: and worship him that made heaven, and earth, and the sea, and the fountains of water."¹

This was the angel of Cyril; this the announcement of those "latter days" from which the Mormon church, on Rigdon's motion soon took its name.

That Rigdon's attention had been attracted to an "Everlasting Gospel" is proved by the constant references made to it in writings of which he had at least the supervision, from the very beginning of the church. Thus, when he preached his first sermon before a Mormon audience -- on the occasion of his visit to Smith at Palmyra in 1830 -- he took as his text a part of the version of Revelation xiv, which he had put into the Mormon Bible (I Nephi xiii. 40), and in

his sermon, as reported by Tucker, who heard it, holding the Scriptures in one hand and the Mormon Bible in the other, he said, "that they were inseparably necessary to complete the everlasting gospel of the Saviour Jesus Christ." In the account in Smith's autobiography, of the first description of the buried book given to Smith by the angel, its two features are named separately, first, "an account of the former inhabitants of this continent," and then the fulness of the Everlasting Gospel." That Rigdon never lost sight of the importance, in his view, of an "Everlasting Gospel" may be seen from the following quotation from one of his articles in his Pittsburg organ, the *Messenger and Advocate*, of June 15, 1845,

¹ "Bisping (after Gerlach) takes Rev. xiv. 6-11 to foretell that three great events at the end of the last world-week are immediately to precede Christ's second advent: (1) the announcement of the 'eternal' Gospel to the whole world (Matt. xxiv. 14); (2) the Fall of Babylon; (3) a warning to all who worship the beast. . . Burger says this vision can denote nothing but a last admonition and summons to conversion shortly before the end." -- Note in "Commentary by Bishops and Other Clergy of the Anglican Church."

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after his expulsion from Nauvoo: "It is a strict observance of the principles of the fulness of the Everlasting Gospel of Jesus Christ, as contained in the Bible, Book of Mormon, and Book of Covenants, which alone will insure a man an inheritance in the kingdom of our God."

The importance attached to the "Everlasting Gospel" by the founders of the church is seen further in the references to it in the "Book of Doctrine and Covenants," which it is not necessary to cite,¹ and further in a pamphlet by Elder Moses [Martin] of New York (1842), entitled "A Treatise on the Fulness of the

Everlasting Gospel, setting forth its First Principles, Promises, and Blessings," in which he argued that the appearance of the angle to Smith was in direct line with the Scriptural teaching, and that the last days were near.

¹ For examples see Sec. 68, 1; Sec. 101, 22; Sec. 124, 88.

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CHAPTER X

THE WITNESSES TO THE PLATES

In his accounts to his neighbors of the revelation to him of the golden plates on which the "record" was written, Smith always declared that no person but him could look on those plates and live. But when the printed book came out, it, like all subsequent editions to this day, was preceded by the following "testimonies": --

"THE TESTIMONY OF THREE WITNESSES

"Be it known unto all nations, kindreds, tongues, and people unto whom this work shall come, that we through the grace of God the Father, and our Lord Jesus Christ, have seen the plates which contain this record, which is a record of the people of Nephi, and also of the Lamanites, their brethren, and also the people of Jared, who came from the tower of which hath been spoken; and we also know that they have been translated by the gift and power of God, for his voice hath declared it unto us; wherefore we know of a surety that the work is true. And we also testify that we have seen the engravings which are upon the plates; and they have been shewn unto us by the power of God, and not of man. And we declare with words of soberness, that an angel of God came down from heaven, and he brought and laid before our eyes, that we

beheld and saw the plates, and the engravings thereon; and we know that it is by the grace of God the Father, and our Lord Jesus Christ, that we beheld and bear record that these things are true; and it is marvellous in our eyes, nevertheless the voice of the Lord commanded us that we should bear record of it; wherefore, to be obedient unto the commandments of God, we bear testimony of these things. And we know that if we are faithful in Christ, we shall rid our garments of the blood of all men, and be found spotless before the judgment-seat of Christ, and shall dwell with him eternally in the heavens. And the honour be to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Ghost, which is one God. Amen."

OLIVER COWDERY,
DAVID WHITMER,
MARTIN HARRIS.

"AND ALSO THE TESTIMONY OF THE EIGHT
WITNESSES

"Be it known unto all nations, kindreds, tongues, and people unto whom this work shall come, that Joseph Smith, Jun., the translator of this work, has shewn unto us the plates of which hath been spoken, which have the appearance of

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gold; and as many of the leaves as the said Smith has translated we did handle with our hands; and we also saw the engravings thereon, all of which has the appearance of ancient work, and of curious workmanship. And this we bear record with words of soberness, that the said Smith has shewn unto us, for we have seen and hefted, and know of a surety that the said Smith has got the plates of which we have spoken. And we give our names unto the world, to witness unto the world that which we have seen; and we lie not, God bearing witness of it."

"CHRISTIAN WHITMER, HIRAM PAGE,
JACOB WHITMER, JOSEPH SMITH, SEN.,
PETER WHITMER, JUN., HYRUM SMITH,
JOHN WHITMER, SAMUEL H. SMITH."

In judging of the value of this testimony, we may first inquire, what the prophet has to say about it, and may

then look into the character and qualification of the witnesses.

We find a sufficiently full explanation of Testimony No. 1 in Smith's autobiography and in his "revelations." Nothing could be more natural than that such men as the prophet was dealing with should demand a sight of any plates from which he might be translating. Others besides Harris made such a demand, and Smith repeated the warning that to look on them was death. This might satisfy members of his own family, but it did not quiet his scribes, and he tells us that Cowdery, David Whitmer, and Harris "teased me so much" (these are his own words) that he gave out a "revelation" in March, 1829 (Sec. 5, "Doctrine and Covenants"), in which the Lord was represented as saying that the prophet had no power over the plates except as He granted it, but that to his testimony would be added "the testimony of three of my servants, whom I shall call and ordain, unto whom I will show these things," adding, "and to none else will I grant this power, to receive this same testimony among this generation. "The Lord was distrustful of Harris, and commanded him not to be talkative on the subject, but to say nothing about it except, "I have seen them, and they have been shown unto me by the power of God."

Smith's own account of the showing of the plates to these three witnesses is so luminous that it may be quoted. After going out into the woods, they had to stand Harris off by himself because of his evil influence. Then: --

"We knelt down again, and had not been many minutes engaged in prayer when presently we beheld a light above us in the air of exceeding brightness;

and behold an angel stood before us. In his hands he held the plates which we had been praying for these to have a view of; he turned over the leaves one by one, so that we could see them and discover the engravings thereon distinctly. He then addressed himself to David Whitmer and said, 'David, blessed is the Lord and he that keeps his commandments'; when immediately afterward we heard a voice from out of the bright light above us saying, 'These plates have been revealed by the power of God, and they have been translated by the power of God. The translation of them is correct, and I command you to bear record of what you now see and hear.'

"I now left David and Oliver, and went into pursuit of Martin Harris, whom I found at a considerable distance, fervently engaged in prayer. He soon told me, however, that he had not yet prevailed with the Lord, and earnestly requested me to join him in prayer, that he might also realize the same blessings which we had just received. We accordingly joined in prayer, and immediately obtained our desires; for before we had yet finished, the same vision was opened to our view, *at least it was again to me* {Joe thus refuses to vouch for Harris's declaration on the subject}; and I once more beheld and heard the same things; whilst, at the same moment, Martin Harris cried out, apparently in ecstasy of joy, 'Tis enough, mine eyes hath beheld,' and, jumping up, he shouted 'Hosannah,' blessing God, and otherwise rejoiced exceedingly."¹

If this story taxes the credulity of the reader, his doubts about the value of this "testimony" will increase when he traces the history of the three witnesses. Surely, if any three men in the church should remain steadfast, mighty pillars of support for the prophet in his future troubles, it should be these chosen witnesses to the actual existence of the golden plates. Yet everyone of them became an apostate, and every one of them was loaded with all the opprobrium that the church could pile upon him.

Cowdery's reputation was locally bad at the time. "I was personally acquainted with Oliver Cowdery," said Danforth Booth, an old resident of Palmyra, in 1880. "He was a pettifogger; their (the Smiths') cat-paw to do their dirty work."² Smith's trouble with him, which began during the work of translating, continued, and Smith found it necessary to say openly in a

"revelation" given out in Ohio in 1831 (Sec. 69), when preparations were making for a trip of some of the brethren to Missouri, "It is not wisdom in me that he should be intrusted with the commandments and the monies which he shall carry unto the land of Zion, except one go with him who will be true and faithful."

¹ *Millennial Star*, Vol. XIV, Supt., p. 19.

² Among affidavits on file in the county clerk's office at Canandaigua, New York.

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By the time Smith took his final departure to Missouri, Cowdery and David and John Whitmer had lost caste entirely, and in June, 1838, they fled to escape the Danites at Far West. The letter of warning addressed to them and signed by more than eighty Mormons, giving them three days in which to depart, contained the following accusations: --

"After Oliver Cowdery had been taken by a state warrant for stealing, and the stolen property found in the house of William W. Phelps; in which nefarious transaction John Whitmer had also participated. Oliver Cowdery stole the property, conveyed it to John Whitmer, and John Whitmer to William W. Phelps; and then the officers of law found it. While in the hands of an officer, and under an arrest for this vile transaction, and, if possible, to hide your shame from the world like criminals (which, indeed, you were), you appealed to our beloved brethren, President Joseph Smith Jr. and Sidney Rigdon, men whose characters you had endeavored to destroy by every artifice you could invent, not even the basest lying excepted....

"The Saints in Kirtland having elected Oliver Cowdery to a justice of the peace, he used the power of that office to take their most sacred rights from them, and that contrary to law. He supported a parcel of blacklegs, and in disturbing the worship of the Saints; and when the men whom the church had chosen to preside over their meetings endeavored to put the house to order, he helped (and by the authority of his justice's office too) these wretches to continue their confusion; and threatened the church with a

prosecution for trying to put them out of the house; and issued writs against the Saints for endeavoring to sustain their rights; and bound themselves under heavy bonds to appear before his honor; and required bonds which were both inhuman and unlawful; and one of these was the venerable father, who had been appointed by the church to preside -- a man of upwards of seventy years of age, and notorious for his peaceable habits.

"Oliver Cowdery, David Whitmer and Lyman E. Johnson, united with a gang of counterfeiters, thieves, liars and blacklegs of the deepest dye, to deceive, cheat and defraud the Saints out of their property, by every art and stratagem which wickedness could invent; using the influence of the vilest persecutions to bring vexatious lawsuits, villainous prosecutions, and even stealing not excepted.... During the full career of Oliver Cowdery and David Whitmer's bogus money business, it got abroad into the world that they were engaged in it, and several gentlemen were preparing to commence a prosecution against Cowdery; he finding it out, took with him Lyman E. Johnson, and fled to Far West with their families; Cowdery stealing property and bringing it with him, which has been, within a few weeks past, obtained by the owner by means of a search warrant, and he was saved from the penitentiary by the influence of two influential men of the place. He also brought notes with him upon which he had received pay, and made an attempt to sell them to Mr. Arthur of Clay County."¹

¹ "Documents in Relation to the Disturbances with the Mormons, "Missouri Legislature (1841), p. 103.

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Rigdon, who was the author of this arraignment, realizing that the enemies of the church would not fail to make use of this aspersion of the character of the witnesses, attempted to "hedge" by saying, in the same document, "We wish to remind you that Oliver Cowdery and David Whitmer were among the principal of those who were the means of gathering us to this place by their testimony which they gave concerning the plates of the Book of Mormon, that they were shown to them by an angel; which testimony

we believe now as much as before you had so scandalously disgraced it." Could affrontery go to greater lengths?

Cowdery and David Whitmer fled to Richmond, Missouri, where Whitmer lived until his death in January, 1888. Cowdery went to Tiffin, Ohio, where, after failing to obtain a position as an editor because of his Mormon reputation, he practised law. While living there he renounced his Mormon views, joined the Methodist church, and became superintendent of a Sunday-school. Later he moved to Wisconsin, but, after being defeated for the legislature there, he recanted his Methodist belief, and rejoined the Saints while they were at Council Bluffs, in October, 1848, after the main body had left for Salt Lake Valley. He addressed a meeting there by invitation, testifying to the truth of the Book of Mormon, and the mission of Smith as a prophet, and saying that he wanted to be rebaptized into the church, not as a leader, but simply as a member.¹ He did not, however, go to Utah with the Saints, but returned to his old friend Whitmer in Missouri, and died there in 1850. It has been stated that he offered to give a full renunciation of the Mormon faith when he united with the Methodists at Tiffin, if required, but asked to be excused from doing so on the ground that it would invite criticism and bring him into contempt.² One of his Tiffin acquaintances afterward testified that Cowdery confessed to him that, when he signed the "testimony," he "was not one of the best men in the world," using his own expression.³ The Mormons were always grateful to him for his silence under their persecutions, and the *Millennial Star*, in a notice of his death, expressed satisfaction that in the days of his apostasy "he never, in a single instance, cast the least doubt on his former testimony,"

¹ *Millennial Star*, Vol. XI, p.14.

² "Naked Truths about Mormonism," A. B. Demming, Oakland, California, 1888.

³ "Gregg's History of Hancock County, Illinois," p. 257.

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adding, "May he rest in peace, to come forth in the morning of the first resurrection into eternal life, is the earnest desire of all Saints."

The Whitmers were a Dutch family, known among their neighbors as believers in witches and in the miraculous generally, as has been shown in Mother Smith's account of their sending for Joseph. A "revelation" to the three witnesses which first promised them a view of the plates (Sec. 17) told them, "It is *by your faith* you shall obtain a view of them," and directed them to testify concerning the plates, "that my servant Joseph Smith, Jr., may not be destroyed." One of the converts who joined the Mormons at Kirtland, Ohio, testified in later years that David Whitmer confessed to her that he never actually saw the plates, explaining his testimony thus: "Suppose that you had a friend whose character was such that you knew it impossible that he could lie; then, if he described a city to you which you had never seen, could you not, by the eye of faith, see the city just as he described it?"¹

The Mormons have found consolation in the fact that Whitmer continued to affirm his belief in the authenticity of the Mormon Bible to the day of his death. He declared, however, that Smith and Young had led the flock astray, and, after the open announcement of polygamy in Utah, he announced a church of his own, called "The Church of Christ," refusing to affiliate even with the Reorganized Church because of the latter's adherence to Smith. In his "Address to Believers in the Book of Mormon," a pamphlet issued in his eighty-second year, he said, "Now, in 1849 the Lord saw fit to manifest unto John

Whitmer, Oliver Cowdery and myself nearly all the remaining errors of doctrine into which we had been led by the heads of the church." The reader from all this can form an estimate of the trustworthiness of the second witness on such a subject.

We have already learned a great deal about Martin Harris's mental equipment. A lawyer of standing in Palmyra told Dr. Clark that, after Harris had signed the "testimony," he pressed him with the question: "Did you see the plates with your natural eyes, just as you see this pencil case in my hand? Now say yes or no." Harris replied (in corroboration of Joe's misgiving at the time): "Why, I did not see them as I do that pencil case, yet I saw them

¹ Mrs. Dickenson's "New Light on Mormonism."

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with the eye of faith. I saw them just as distinctly as I see anything around me -- though at the time they were covered over with a cloth."¹

Harris followed Smith to Ohio and then to Missouri, but was ever a trouble to him, although Smith always found his money useful. In 1831, in Missouri, it required a "revelation" (Sec. 58) to spur him to "lay his monies before the Bishop." As his money grew scarcer, he received less and less recognition from the Mormon leaders, and was finally expelled from the church. Smith thus referred to him in the *Elders' Journal*, July, 1837, one of his publications in Ohio: "There are negroes who wear white skins as well as black ones, granny Parish, and others who acted as lackeys, such as Martin Harris."

Harris did not appear on the scene during the stay of the Mormons in Illinois, having joined the Shakers and

lived with them a year or two. When Strang claimed the leadership of the church after Smith's death, Harris gave him his support, and was sent by him with others to England in 1846 to do missionary work. His arrival there was made the occasion of an attack on him by the *Millennial Star*, which, among other things, said:

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"We do not feel to warn the Saints against him, for his own unbridled tongue will soon show out specimens of folly enough to give any person a true index to the character of the man; but if the Saints wish to know what the Lord hath said of him, they may turn to the 178th page of the Book of Doctrine and Covenants, and the person there called a *wicked man* is no other than Martin Harris, and he owned to it then, but probably might not now. It is not the first time the Lord chose a wicked man as a witness. Also on page 193, read the whole revelation given to him, and ask yourselves if the Lord ever talked in that way to a good man. Every one can see that he must have been a wicked man."²

Harris visited Palmyra in 1858. He then said that his property was all gone, that he had declined a restoration to the Mormon church, but that he continued to believe in Mormonism. He thought better of his declination, however, and sought a reunion with the church in Utah in 1870. His backslidings had carried him so far that the church authorities told him it would be necessary for him to be rebaptized. This he consented to with some reluctance, after, as he said, "he had seen his father seeking his aid. He saw his father at the foot of a ladder, striving to get up

¹ "Gleanings by the Way."

² Vol. VIII, p. 123.

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to him, and he went down to him, taking him by the hand, and helped him up."¹ He settled in Cache County, Utah, where he died on July 10, 1875, in his

ninety-third year. "He bore his testimony to the truth and divinity of the Book of Mormon a short time before he departed," wrote his son to an inquirer, "and the last words he uttered, when he could not speak the sentence, were 'Book,' 'Book,' 'Book.'"

The precarious character of Smith's original partners in the Bible business is further illustrated by his statement that, in the summer of 1830, Cowdery sent him word that he had discovered an error in one of Smith's "revelations,"² and that the Whitmer family agreed with him on the subject. Smith was as determined in opposing this questioning of his divine authority as he always was in stemming any opposition to his leadership, and he made them all acknowledge their error. Again, when Smith returned to Fayette from Harmony, in August, 1830 (more than a year after the plates were shown to the witnesses), he found that "Satan had been lying in wait," and that Hiram Page, of the second list of witnesses, had been obtaining revelations through a "peek-stone" of his own, and that, what was more serious, Cowdery and the Whitmer family believed in them. The result of this was an immediate "revelation" (Sec. 28) directing Cowdery to go and preach the Gospel to the Lamanites (Indians) on the western border, and to take along with him Hiram Page, and tell him that the things he had written by means of the "peek-stone" were not of the Lord.

Neither Smith's autobiography nor the "Book of Doctrine and Covenants" contains any explanation of the second "testimony." The list of persons who signed it, however, leaves little doubt that the prophet yielded to their "teasing" as he did to that of the original three. The first four signers were members of the Whitmer family. Hiram Page was a root-doctor by calling, and a son-in-law of Peter Whitmer, Sr. The three Smiths were the prophet's father and two of his brothers.³

¹ For an account of Harris's Utah experience, see *Millennial Star*,

Vol. XLVIII, pp. 357-389.

² *Millennial Star*, Vol. XIV, p. 36.

³ Christian Whitmer died in Clay County, Missouri, November 27, 1835; Jacob died in Richmond County, April 21, 1866; Peter died in Clay County, September 22, 1836; Hiram Page died on a farm in Ray County, August 12, 1852.

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The favorite Mormon reply to any question as to the value of these "testimonies" is the challenge, "Is there a person on the earth who can prove that these eleven witnesses did not see the plates?" Curiously, the prophet himself can be cited to prove this, in the words of the revelation granting a sight of the plates to the first three, which said, "And to none else will I grant this power, to receive this same testimony among this generation." A footnote to this declaration in the "Doctrine and Covenants" offers, as an explanation of Testimony No. 2; the statement that others "may receive a knowledge by other manifestations." This is well meant but transparent.

Mother Smith in later years added herself to these witnesses. She said to the Rev. Henry Caswall, in Nauvoo, in 1842, "I have myself seen and handled the golden plates." Mr. Caswall adds: --"While the old woman was thus delivering herself, I fixed my eyes steadily upon her. She faltered and seemed unwilling to meet my glances, but gradually recovered her self-possession. The melancholy thought entered my mind that this poor old creature was not simply a dupe of her son's knavery, but that she had taken an active part in the deception."

Two matters have been cited by Mormon authorities to show that there was nothing so very unusual in the discovery of buried plates containing engraved letters. Announcement was made in 1843 of the discovery

near Kinderhook, Illinois, of six plates similar to those described by Smith. The story, as published in the *Times and Seasons*, with a certificate signed by nine local residents, set forth that a merchant of the place, named Robert Wiley, while digging in a mound, after finding ashes and human bones, came to "a bundle that consisted of six plates of brass, of a bell shape, each having a hole near the small end, and a ring through the mall;" and that, when cleared of rust, they were found to be "completely covered with characters that none as yet have been able to read." Hyde, accepting this story, printed a facsimile of one of these plates on the cover of his book, and seems to rest on Wiley's statement his belief that "Smith did have plates of some kind." Stenhouse,¹ who believed that Smith and his witnesses did not

¹ T. B. H. Stenhouse, a Scotchman, was converted to the Mormon belief in 1846, performed diligent missionary work in Europe, and was for three years president of the Swiss and Italian missions. Joining the brethren in Utah with his wife, he was persuaded

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perpetrate in the new Bible an intentional fraud, but thought they had visions and "revelations," referring to the Kinderhook plates, says that they were "actually and unquestionably discovered by one Mr. R. Wiley." Smith himself, after no one else could read the writing on them, declared that he had translated them, and found them to be a history of a descendant of Ham.¹

But the true story of the Kinderhook plates was disclosed by an affidavit made by W. Fulgate of

Mound Station, Brown County, Illinois, before Jay Brown, Justice of the Peace, on June 30, 1879. In this he stated that the plates were "a humbug, gotten up by Robert Wiley, Bridge Whitton, and myself. Whitton (who was a blacksmith) cut the plates out of some pieces of copper Wiley and I made the hieroglyphics by making impressions on beeswax and filling them with acid, and putting it on the plates. When they were finished, we put them together with rust made of nitric acid, old iron and lead, and bound them with a piece of hoop iron, covering them completely with the rust." He describes the burial of the plates and their digging up, among the spectators of the latter being two Mormon elders, Marsh and Sharp. Sharp declared that the Lord had directed them to witness the digging. The plates were borrowed and shown to Smith, and were finally given to one "Professor" McDowell of St. Louis, for his museum.²

In attacking Professor Anthon's statement concerning the alleged hieroglyphics shown to him by Harris, Orson Pratt, in his "Divine Authenticity of the Book of Mormon," thought that he found substantial support for Smith's hieroglyphics in the fact that "Two years after the Book of Mormon appeared in print, Professor Rafinesque, in his *Atlantic journal* for 1832, gave to the public a facsimile of American glyphs,³ found in Mexico. They are

to take a second wife. Not long afterward he joined in the protest against Young's dictatorial course which was known as the "New Movement," and was expelled from the church. His "Rocky Mountain Saints" (1873) contains so much valuable information connected with the history of the church that it has been largely drawn on by E. W. Tullidge in his "History of Salt Lake City and Its Founders," which is accepted by the church.

¹ *Millennial Star*, January 15, 1859, where cuts of the plates (here produced) are given.

² Wyl's "Mormon Portraits," p. 207. The secretary of the Missouri Historical Society writes me that McDowell's museum disappeared some years ago, most of its contents being lost or stolen, and the fate of the Kinderhook plates cannot be

ascertained.

³ "Glyph: A pictograph or word carved in a compact distinct figure." -- "Standard Dictionary.

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arranged in columns.... By an inspection of the facsimile of these forty-six elementary glyphs, we find all the particulars which Professor Anthon ascribes to the characters which he says 'a plain-looking countryman' presented to him. "These" elementary glyphs "of Rafinesque are some of the characters found on the famous "Tablet of the Cross" in the ruins of Palenque, Mexico, since so fully described by Stevens. A facsimile of the entire Tablet may be found on page 355, Vol. IV, Bancroft's "Native Races of the Pacific States." Rafinesque selected these characters from the Tablet, and arranged them in columns alongside of other ancient writings, in order to sustain his argument that they resembled an old Libyan alphabet. Rafinesque was a voluminous writer both on archaeological and botanical subjects, but wholly untrustworthy. Of his *Atlantic Journal* (of which only eight numbers appeared) his biographer, R. E. Call, says that it had "absolutely no scientific value." Professor Asa Gray, in a review of his botanical writings in *Silliman's Journal*, Vol. XL, No. 2, 1841, said, "He assumes thirty to one hundred years as the average time required for the production of a new species, and five hundred to one thousand for a new genus." Professor Gray refers to a paper which Rafinesque sent to the editor of a scientific journal describing twelve new species of thunder and lightning. He was very fond of inventing names, and his designation of Palenque as Otolum was only an illustration of this. So much for the "elementary glyphs."

Note: For B. H. Roberts' reply to Linn's Chapter IX, see an on-line excerpt at the Spalding Studies Library: [Roberts 1909 reply](#).

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CHAPTER XI

THE MORMON BIBLE

The Mormon Bible,¹ both in a literary and a theological sense, is just such a production as would be expected to result from handing over to Smith and his fellow- "translators" a mass of Spaulding's material and new doctrinal matter for collation and copying. Not one of these men possessed any literary skill or accurate acquaintance with the Scriptures. David Whitmer, in an interview in Missouri in his later years, said, "So illiterate was Joseph at that time that he didn't know that Jerusalem was a walled city, and he was utterly unable to pronounce many of the names that the magic power of the Urim and Thummim revealed." Chronology, grammar, geography, and Bible history were alike ignored in the work. An effort was made to correct some of these errors in the early days of the church, and Smith speaks of doing some of this work himself at Nauvoo. An edition issued there in 1842 contains on the title-page the words, "Carefully revised by the translator." Such corrections have continued to the present day, and a comparison of the latest Salt Lake edition with the first has shown more than three thousand changes.

The person who for any reason undertakes the reading of this book sets before himself a tedious task. Even the orthodox Mormons have found this to be true, and their Bible has played a very much less considerable part in the church worship than Smith's "revelations" and the discourses of their preachers. Referring to Orson Pratt's² labored writings on this Bible, Stenhouse says,

¹ The title of this Bible is "The Book of Mormon"; but as one of its sub-divisions is a Book of Mormon, I use the title "Mormon Bible," both to avoid confusion and for convenience.

² Orson Pratt was a clerk in a store in Hiram, Ohio, when he was converted to Mormonism. He seems to have been a natural student, and he rose to prominence in the church, being one of the first to expound and defend the Mormon Bible and doctrines, holding a professorship in Nauvoo University, publishing works on the higher mathematics, and becoming one of the Twelve Apostles.

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"Of the hundreds of thousands of witnesses to whom God has I revealed the truth of the 'Book of Mormon,' Pratt knows full well that comparatively few indeed have ever read that book, know little or nothing intelligently of its contents, and take little interest in it."¹ An examination of its contents is useful, therefore, rather as a means of proving the fraudulent character of its pretension to divine revelation than as a means of ascertaining what the members of the Mormon church are taught.

The following page presents a facsimile of the title-page of the first edition of this Bible. The editions of to-day substitute "Translated by Joseph Smith, Jun.," for "By Joseph Smith, junior, author and proprietor."

The first edition contains 588 duodecimo pages, and is divided into 15 books which are named as follows: "First Book of Nephi, his reign and ministry," 7 chapters; "Second Book of Nephi," 15 chapters; "Book of Jacob, the Brother of Nephi," 5 chapters; "Book of Enos," 1 chapter; "Book of Jarom," 1 chapter; "Book of Omni," 1 chapter; "Words of Mormon," 1 chapter; "Book of Mosiah," 13 chapters; "Book of Alma Son of Alma," 30 chapters; "Book of Helaman," 5 chapters; "Third Book of Nephi, the Son of Nephi, which was the son of Helaman," 14 chapters; "Fourth Book of Nephi, which is the Son of Nephi, one of the Disciples of Jesus Christ," 1 chapter; "Book of Mormon," 4 chapters; "Book of Ether," 6 chapters; "Book of Moroni," 10 chapters. The chapters

in the first edition were not divided into verses, that work, with the preparation of the very complete foot-note references in the later editions, having been performed by Orson Pratt.

The historical narrative that runs through the book is so disjointedly arranged, mixed up with doctrinal parts, and repeated, that it is not easy to unravel it. The following summary of it is contained in a letter to Colonel John Wentworth of Chicago, signed by Joseph Smith, Jr., which was printed in Wentworth's Chicago newspaper and also in the Mormon Times and Seasons of March 1, 1842 : --

"The history of America is unfolded from its first settlement by a colony that came from the Tower of Babel at the confusion of languages, to the beginning of

¹"Rocky Mountain Saints," p, 553.

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the 5th century of the Christian era. We are informed by these records that America in ancient times has been inhabited by two distinct races of people. The first were called Jaredites, and came directly from the Tower of Babel. The second race came directly from the city of Jerusalem about 600 years before Christ. They were principally Israelites of the descendants of Joseph. The Jaredites were destroyed about the time that the Israelites came from Jerusalem, who succeeded them in the inhabitation of the country. The principal nation of the second race fell in battle toward the close of the fourth century. The remnant are the Indians that now inhabit this country."

This history purports to have been handed down, on metallic plates, from one historian to another, beginning with Nephi, from the time of the departure from Jerusalem. Finally (4 Nephi i. 48, 49¹), the people being wicked, Ammaron, by direction of the Holy Ghost, hid these sacred records "that they might come again unto the remnant of the house of Jacob."

To bring the story down to a comparatively recent date, and

account for the finding of the plates by Smith, the Book of Mormon was written by the "author." This subdivision is an abridgment of the previous records. It relates that Mormon, a descendant of Nephi, when ten years old, was told by Ammaron that, when about twenty-four years old, he should go to the place where the records were hidden, take only the plates of Nephi, and engrave on them all the things he had observed concerning the people. The next year Mormon was taken by his father, whose name also was Mormon, to the land of Zarahemla, which had become covered with buildings and very populous, but the people were warlike and wicked. Mormon in time, "seeing that the Lamanites were about to overthrow the land," took the records from their hiding-place. He himself accepted the command of the armies of the Nephites, but they were defeated with great slaughter, the Lamanites laying waste their cities and driving them northward.

Finally Mormon sent a letter to the king of the Lamanites, asking that the Nephites might gather their people "unto the land of Cumorah, by a hill which was called Cumorah, and there we would give them battle." There, in the year 384 A.D., Mormon "made this record out of the plates of Nephi, and hid up in the hill Cumorah all the records which have been entrusted to me by the hand of the Lord, save it were those few plates which I

¹ All references to the Mormon Bible by chapter and verse refer to Salt Lake City edition of 1888.

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gave unto my son Moroni."¹ This hill, according to the Mormon teaching, is the hill near Palmyra, New York, where Smith found the plates, just as Mormon had deposited them.

In the battle which took place there the Nephites were practically annihilated, and all the fugitives were killed except Moroni, the son of Mormon, who undertook the completion of the "record." Moroni excuses the briefness of his narrative by explaining that he had not room in the plates, "and ore have I none" (to make others).

What he adds is in the nature of a defence of the revealed character of the Mormon Bible and of Smith's character as a prophet. Those, for instance, who say that there are no longer "revelations, nor prophecies, nor gifts, nor healing, nor speaking with tongues," are told that they know not the Gospel of Christ and do not understand the Scriptures. An effort is made to forestall criticism of the "mistakes" that are conceded in the title-page dedication by saying, "Condemn me not because of mine imperfection, neither my father, because of his imperfection, neither them who have written before him " (Book of Mormon ix. 31).

Evidently foreseeing that it would be asked why these "records," written by Jews and their descendants, were not in Hebrew, Mormon adds (chap. ix. 32, 33): --

"And now behold, we have written this record according to our knowledge, in the characters which are called among us the reformed Egyptian, being handed down and altered by us, according to our manner of speech.

"And if our plates had been sufficiently large, we should have written in Hebrew; but the Hebrew hath been altered by us also; and if we could have written in Hebrew, behold, ye would have had no' imperfection in our record."

Few parts of this mythical Bible approached nearer to the burlesque than this excuse for having descendants of the Jews write in "reformed Egyptian."

The secular story of the ancient races running through this Bible is so confused by the introduction of new matter by the "author"² and by repetitions that it is puzzling to pick it out.

¹ Hyde gives a list of twenty-four additional plates mentioned in this Bible which must still await digging up in the hill near Palmyra.

² **Professor Whitsitt**, of the Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, Louisville, Kentucky, in his article on Mormonism in "The Concise Dictionary of Religious Knowledge, and Gazetteer" (New York, 1891), divides the Mormon Bible into three sections, viz.: the first thirteen books, presented as the works of Mormon; the Book of Ether, with which Mormon had no connection; and the fifteenth book, "which was [\[continued\]](#)

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The Book of Ether was somewhat puzzling even to the early Mormons, and we find Parley P. Pratt, in his analysis of it, printed in London in 1854, saying, "Ether seems to have been a lineal descendant of Jared."

Very concisely, this Bible story of the most ancient race that came to America, the Jaredites, may be thus stated: --

This race, being righteous, were not punished by the Lord at Babel, but were led to the ocean, where they constructed a vessel by direction of the Lord, in which they sailed to North America. According to the Book of Ether, there were eight of these vessels, and that they were remarkable craft needs only the description given of them to show: "They were built after a manner that they were exceeding tight, even that they would hold water like unto a dish; and the bottom thereof was tight like unto a dish; and the sides thereof were tight like unto a dish; and the ends thereof were peaked; and the top thereof was tight like unto a dish; and the length thereof was the length of a tree; and the door thereof, when it was shut, was tight like unto a dish " (Book

sent forth by the editor under the name of Moroni." He thus explains his view of the "editing " that was done in the preparation of the work for publication: --

"The editor undertook to rewrite and recast the whole of the abridgment (of Nephi's previous history), but his industry failed him at the close of the Book of Omni. The first six books that he had rewritten were given the names of the small plates. The book called the 'Words of Mormon' in the original work stood at the beginning, as a sort of preface to the entire abridgment of Mormon; but when the editor had rewritten the first six books, he felt that these were properly his own performance, and the 'Words of Mormon' were assigned a position just in front of the Book of Mosiah, when the abstract of Mormon took its real commencement. . . .

"The question may now be raised as to who was the editor of the Book of Mormon. In its theological positions and coloring the Book of Mormon is a volume of Disciple theology (this does not include the later polygamous doctrine and other gross Mormon errors). This conclusion is capable of demonstration beyond any reasonable question. Let notice also be taken of the fact that the

Book of Mormon bears traces of two several redactions. It contains, in the first redaction, that type of doctrine which the Disciples held and proclaimed prior to November 18, 1827, when they had not yet formally embraced what is commonly considered to be the tenet of baptismal remission. It also contains the type of doctrine which the Disciples have been defending since November 18, 1827, under the name of the ancient Gospel, of which the tenet of so-called baptismal remission is a leading feature. All authorities agree that Mr. Smith obtained possession of the work on September 22, 1827, a period of nearly two months before the Disciples concluded to embrace this tenet. The editor felt that the Book of Mormon would be sadly incomplete if this notion were not included. Accordingly, he found means to communicate with Mr. Smith, and, regaining possession of certain portions of the manuscript, to insert the new item. . . . **Rigdon was the only Disciple minister who vigorously and continuously demanded that his brethren should adopt the additional points that have been indicated."**

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of Ether ii. 17). This description certainly establishes the general resemblance of these barges to some kind of a dish, but the rather careless comparison of their length simply to that of a "tree" leaves this detail of construction uncertain.

Just before they embarked in these vessels, a brother of Jared went up on Mount Shelem, where the Lord touched sixteen small stones that he had taken up with him, two of which were the Urim and Thummim, by means of which Smith translated the plates. These stones lighted up the vessels on their trip across the ocean. Jared's brother was told by the spirit on the mount, "Behold, I am Jesus Christ." A footnote in the modern edition of this Bible kindly explains that Jared's brother " saw the pre-existent spirit of Jesus."

When they landed (somewhere on the Isthmus of Darien), the Lord commanded Nephi to make " plates of ore," on which should be engraved the record of the people. This was the origin of Smith's plates. In time this people divided themselves, under the leadership of two of Lehi's sons -- Nephi and Laman -- into Nephites and Lamanites (with subdivisions). The Lamanites, in the course of two hundred years, had become dark in color and "wild and ferocious, and a bloodthirsty people; full of idolatry and filthiness; 'feeding upon beasts of prey; dwelling in tents and wandering

about in the wilderness, with a short skin girdle about their loins, and their heads shaved; and their skill was in the bow and the cimeter and the ax" (Enos i. 20). The Nephites, on the other hand, tilled the land and raised flocks. Between the two tribes wars waged, the Nephites became wicked, and in the course of 320 years the worst of them were destroyed (Book of Alma).

Then the Lord commanded those who would hearken to his voice to depart with him to the wilderness, and they journeyed until they came to the land of Zarahemla, which a footnote to the modern edition explains "is supposed to have been north of the head waters of the river Magdalena, its northern boundary being a few days' journey south of the Isthmus" (of Darien). There they found the people of Zarahemla, who had left Jerusalem when Zedekiah was carried captive into Babylon. New teachers arose who taught the people righteousness, and one of them, named Alma; led a company to "a place which was called Mormon," where was a fountain of pure water, and there Alma baptized the

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people. The Book of Alma, the longest in this Bible, is largely an account of the secular affairs of the inhabitants, with stories of great battles, a prediction of the coming of Christ, and an account of a great migration northward, and the building of ships that sailed in the same direction.

3 Nephi describes the appearance of Christ to the people of the western continent, preceded by a star, earthquakes, etc. On the day of His appearance they heard "a small voice" out of heaven, saying, "Behold my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased, in whom I have glorified my name; hear ye him." Then Christ appeared and spoke to them, generally in the language of the New Testament (repeating, for instance, the Sermon on the Mount¹), and afterward ascended into heaven in a cloud. The expulsion of the Nephites northward, and their final destruction, in what is now New York State, followed in the course of the next 384 years.

There is throughout the book an imitation of the style of the Holy

Scriptures. Verse after verse begins with the words "and it came to pass," as Spaulding's Ohio neighbors recalled that his story did. The following extract, from I Nephi, chap. viii, will give an illustration of the literary style of a large part of the work: --

"1. And it came to pass that we had gathered together all manner of seeds of every kind, both of grain of every kind, and also of the seeds of fruit of every kind.

"2. And it came to pass that while my father tarried in the wilderness, he spake unto us, saying, Behold, I have dreamed a dream; or in other words, I have seen a vision.

"3. And behold, because of the thing which I have seen, I have reason to rejoice in the Lord, because of Nephi and also of Sam; for I have reason to suppose that they, and also many of their seed, will be saved.

"4. But behold, Laman and Lemuel, I fear exceedingly because of you; for behold, methought I saw in my dream, a dark and dreary wilderness.

"5. And it came to pass that I saw a man, and he was dressed in a white robe; and he came and stood before me.

"6. And it came to pass that he spake unto me, and bade me follow him.

¹ In the Mormon version of this sermon the words, "If thy right eye offend thee, pluck it out and cast it from thee," and "If thy right hand offend thee, cut it off and cast it from thee," are lacking. The Deseret Evening News of February 21, 1900, in explaining this omission, says that the report by Mormon of the "discourse delivered by Jesus Christ to the Nephites on this continent after his resurrection from the dead . . . may not be full and complete."

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"7. And it came to pass that as I followed him, I beheld myself that I was in a dark and dreary waste.

"8. And after I had travelled for the space of many hours in darkness, I began to pray unto the Lord that he would have mercy on me, according to the multitude of his tender mercies.

"9. And it came to pass after I had prayed unto the Lord, I beheld a large and spacious field.

"10. And it came to pass that I beheld a tree, whose fruit was desirable to make one happy. i

"11. And it came to pass that I did go forth, and partake of the fruit thereof; and I beheld that it was most sweet, above all that I ever before tasted. Yea, and I beheld that the fruit thereof was white, to exceed all the whiteness that I had ever seen."

Whole chapters of the Scriptures are incorporated word for word. In the first edition some of these were appropriated without any credit; in the Utah editions they are credited. Beside these, Hyde counted 298 direct quotations from the New Testament, verses or sentences, between pages 2 to 428, covering the years from 600 B.C. to Christ's birth. Thus, Nephi relates that his father, more than two thousand years before the King James edition of the Bible was translated, in announcing the coming of John the Baptist, used these words, "Yea, even he should go forth and cry in the wilderness, prepare ye the way of the Lord, and make his paths straight; for there standeth one among you whom ye know not; and he is mightier than I, whose shoe's latchet I am not worthy to unloose" (1 Nephi x. 8). In Mosiah v. 8, King Benjamin is represented as saying, 124 years before Christ was born, "I would that you should take upon you the name of Christ" as "there is no other name given whereby salvation cometh."

The first Nephi represents John as baptizing in Bethabara (the spelling is Beathabry in the Utah edition), and Alma announces (vii. 10) that "the Son of God shall be born of Mary at Jerusalem." Shakespeare is proved a plagiarist by comparing his words with those of the second Nephi, who, speaking twenty-two hundred years before Shakespeare was born, said (2 Nephi i. 14), "Hear the words of a trembling parent, whose limbs you must soon lay down in the cold and silent grave, from whence no traveller can return."

The chapters of the Scriptures appropriated bodily, and the places where they may be found, are as follows: --

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Isaiah	xlviii and xlix .	pp. 52 to 56	I Nephi, ch. xx, xxi
Isaiah	l and li	pp. 76	2 Nephi, ch. vii
Isaiah	lii	pp. 498	3 Nephi, ch. xx
Isaiah	liv	pp. 501, 502	3.Nephi, ch. xx
Isaiah	ii to xiv . . .	pp. 86 to 101	2 Nephi, ch. xii to
Malachi	iii, iv	pp. 503 to 505	xxiv
Matthew	v,vi,vii	pp. 479 to 483	3 Nephi, ch. xxiv,
I Corinthians	xiii.	pp. 580	xxv
			3 Nephi, ch. xii to
			xix
			Moroni, ch. vii

Among the many anachronisms to be found in the book may be mentioned the giving to Laban of a sword with a blade "of the most precious steel"(I Nephi iv. 9), centuries before the use of steel is elsewhere recorded, and the possession of a compass by the Jaredites when they sailed across the ocean (Alma xxxvii. 38), long before the invention of such an instrument. The ease with which such an error could be explained is shown in the anecdote related of a Utah Mormon who, when told that the compass was not known in Bible times, responded by quoting Acts xxviii. 13, where Paul says, "And from thence we fetched a compass." When Nephi and his family landed in Central America "there were beasts in the forest of every kind, both the cow, and the ox, and the ass, and the horse" (I Nephi xviii. 25). If Nephi does not prevaricate, there must have been a fatal plague among these animals in later years, for horses, cows, and asses were unknown in America until after its discovery by Europeans. Moroni, in the Book of Ether (ix. 18, 19), is still more generous, adding to the possessions of the Jaredites sheep and swine¹ and elephants and "cureloms and cumoms." Neither sheep nor swine are indigenous to America; but the prophet is safe as regards the "cureloms and cumoms," which are animals of his own creation.

The book is full of incidental proofs of the fraudulent profession that it is an original translation. For instance, in incorporating I Corinthians iii. 4, in the Book of Moroni, the phrase "is not easily provoked" is retained, as in the King James edition. But the word "easily " is not found in any Greek manuscript of this verse, and it is dropped in the Revised Version of 1881.

Stenhouse calls attention to many phrases in this Bible which were

peculiar to the revival preachers of those days, like Rigdon,

¹ "And," it is added, "many other kinds of animals which were useful for the use of man," thus ignoring the Hebrew antipathy to pork.

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such as "Have ye spiritually been born of God!" "If ye have experienced a change of heart."

The first edition was full of grammatical errors and amusing phrases. Thus we are told, in Ether xv. 31 that when Coriantumr smote off the head of Shiz, the latter "raised upon his hands and fell." Among other examples from the first edition may be quoted: "and I sayeth"; "all things which are good cometh of God"; "neither doth his angels"; and "hath miracles ceased." We find in Helaman ix. 6, "He being stabbed by his brother by a garb of secrecy." This remains uncorrected.

Alexander Campbell, noting the mixture of doctrines in the book, says, "He (the author) decides all the great controversies (discussed in New York in the last ten years), infant baptism, the Trinity, regeneration, repentance, justification, the fall of man, the atonement, transubstantiation, fasting, penance, church government, the call to the ministry; the general resurrection, eternal punishment, who may baptize, and even the questions of Free-masonry, republican government and the rights of man."¹

Such is the book which is accepted to this day as an inspired work by the thousands of persons who constitute the Mormon church. This acceptance has always been rightfully recognized as fundamentally necessary to the Mormon faith. Orson Pratt declared, "The nature of the message in the Book of Mormon is such that, if true, none can be saved who reject it, and, if false, none can be saved who receive it." Brigham Young told the Conference at Nauvoo in October, 1844, that "Every spirit that confesses that Joseph Smith is a prophet, that he lived and died a prophet, and that the Book of Mormon is true, is of God, and every spirit that does not is of Anti-Christ." There is no

modification of this view in the Mormon church of to-day.

¹ "Delusions: an Analysis of the Book of Mormon" (1832). An exhaustive examination of this Bible will be found in the "Braden and Kelley Public Discussion."

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CHAPTER XII

ORGANIZATION OF THE CHURCH

The director of the steps taken to announce to the world a new Bible and a new church realized, of course, that there must be priests, under some name, to receive members and to dispense its blessing. No person openly connected with Smith in the work of translation had been a clergyman. Accordingly, on May 15, 1829 (still following the prophet's own account), while Smith and Cowdery were yet busy with the work of translation, they went into the woods to ask the Lord for fuller information about the baptism mentioned in the plates. There a messenger from heaven, who, it was learned, was John the Baptist, appeared to them in a cloud of light, "and having laid his hands on us, he ordained us, saying unto us, 'Upon you, my fellow servants, in the name of Messiah, I confer the priesthood of Aaron, which holds the keys of the ministering angels, and of the Gospel of repentance, and of baptism by immersion for the remission of sins.'" The messenger also informed them that "the power of laying on of hands for the gift of the Holy Ghost" would be conferred on them later, through Peter, James, and John, "who held the keys of the priesthood of Melchisedec;" but he directed Smith to baptize Cowdery, and Cowdery then to perform the same office for Smith. This they did at once, and as soon as Cowdery came out of the water he "stood up and prophesied many things" (which the prophet prudently omitted to record). The divine authority thus conferred, according

to Orson Pratt, exceeds that of the bishops of the Roman church, because it came direct from heaven, and not through a succession of popes and bishops.¹

¹ Orson Pratt, in his "Questions and Answers on Doctrine" in his Washington newspaper, *the Seer* (p. 205), thus defined the Mormon view of the Roman Catholic church: --

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Smith and Cowdery at once began telling of the power conferred upon them, and giving their relatives and friends an opportunity to become members of the new church. Smith's brother Samuel was the first convert won over, Cowdery baptizing him. His brother Hyrum came next,¹ and then one J. Knight, Sr., of Colesville, New York.² Each new convert was made the subject of a "revelation," each of which began, "A great and marvelous work is about to come forth among the children of men." Hyrum Smith, and David and Peter Whitmer, Jr., were baptized in Seneca Lake in June, and "from this time forth," says Smith, "many became believers and were baptized, while we continued to instruct and persuade as many as applied for information."

By April 6, 1830, branches of the new church had been established at Fayette, Manchester, and Colesville, New York, with some seventy members in all, it has been stated. Section 20 of the "Doctrine and Covenants" names April 6, 1830, as the date on which the church was "regularly organized and established, agreeable to the laws of our country." This date has been incorrectly given as that on which the first step was taken to form a church organization. What was done then was to organize in a form which, they hoped, would give the church a standing as a legal body.³ The meeting was held at the house of Peter Whitmer. Smith, who, it was revealed, should be the first elder, ordained Cowdery, and Cowdery subsequently ordained Smith. The sacrament was then administered, and the new elders laid their hands on the others present.

"The revelation" (Sec. 20) on the form of church government is dated April, 1830, at least six months before Rigdon's name

Q. "Is the Roman Catholic Church the Church of Christ?" A. "No, for she has no inspired priesthood or officers."

Q. "After the Church of Christ fled from earth to heaven what was left?" A. "A set of wicked apostates, murderers and idolaters," etc.

Q. "Who founded the Roman Catholic Church?" A. "The devil, through the medium of the apostates, who subverted the whole order of God by denying immediate revelation, and substituting in place thereof tradition and ancient revelations as a sufficient rule of faith and practice."

¹ Hyrum wanted to start in to preach at once, and a "revelation" was necessary to inform him: "You need not suppose you are called to preach until you are called.... Keep my commandments; hold your peace" (Sec. 11).

² Colesville is the township in Broome County of which Harpursville is the voting place. Smith organized his converts there about two miles north of Harpursville.

³ Whitmer's "Address to Believers in the Book of Mormon."

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was first associated with the scheme by the visit of Cowdery and his companions to Ohio. If the date is correct, it shows that Rigdon had forwarded this "revelation" to Smith for promulgation, for Rigdon was unquestionably the originator of the system of church government. David Whitmer has explained, "Rigdon would expound the Old Testament Scriptures of the Bible and Book of Mormon, in his way, to Joseph, concerning the priesthood, high priests, etc., and would persuade Brother Joseph to inquire of the Lord about this doctrine and about that doctrine, and of course a revelation would always come just as they desired it."¹

The "revelation" now announced defined the duty of elders, priests, teachers, deacons, and members of the Church of Christ. An apostle was an elder, and it was his calling to baptize, ordain, administer the sacrament, confirm, preach, and take the lead in all meetings. A priest's duty was to preach, baptize, administer the sacrament, and visit members at their houses. Teachers and deacons could not baptize, administer the sacrament, or lay on

hands, but were to preach and invite all to join the church. The elders were directed to meet in conference once in three months, and there was to be a High Council, or general conference of the church, by which should be ordained every President of the high priesthood, bishop, high counsellor, and high priest.

Smith's leadership had, before this, begun to manifest itself. He had, in a generous mood, originally intended to share with others the honor of receiving "revelations," the first of these in the "Book of Doctrine and Covenants," saying, "I the Lord also gave commandments to others, that they should proclaim these things to the world." In the original publication of these "revelations," under the title "Book of Commandments," we find such headings as, "A revelation given to Oliver," "A revelation given to Hyrum," etc. These headings are all changed in the modern edition to read, "Given through Joseph the Seer," etc.

Cowdery was the first of his associates to seek an open share in the divine work. Smith was so pleased with his new scribe when they first met at Harmony, Pennsylvania, that he at once received a "revelation" which incited Cowdery to ask for a division of power. Cowdery was told (Sec. 6), "And behold, I grant unto you a gift, if you desire of me, to translate even as my servant

¹ Whitmer's "Address to Believers in the Book of Mormon."

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Joseph. "Cowdery's desire manifested itself immediately, and Joseph almost as quickly became conscious that he had committed himself too soon. Accordingly, in another "revelation," dated the same month of April, 1829 (Sec. 8), he attempted to cajole Oliver by telling him about a "gift of Aaron" which he possessed, and which was a remarkable gift in itself, adding, "Do not ask for that which you ought not." But Cowdery naturally clung to his promised gift, and kept on asking, and he had to be told right away in still another "revelation" (Sec. 9), that he had not understood, but that he must not murmur, since his work was to write for Joseph. If he was in doubt about a subject, he was advised to

"study it out in your mind;" and if it was right, the Lord promised, "I will cause that your bosom shall burn within you;" but if it was not right, "you shall have a stupor of thought, that shall cause you to forget the thing which is wrong." To assist him until he became accustomed to discriminate between this burning feeling and this stupor, the Lord told him very plainly, "It is not expedient that you should translate now." That all this rankled in Cowdery's heart was shown by his attempt to revise one of Smith's "revelations," and the support he gave to Hiram Page's "gazing."

Cowdery continued to annoy the prophet, and Smith decided to get rid of him. Accordingly in July, 1830, came a "revelation," originally announced as given direct to Joseph's wife Emma, instructing her to act as her husband's scribe, "that I may send my servant Oliver Cowdery whithersoever I will." This occurred on a trip the Smiths had made to Harmony. On their return to Fayette, Smith found Cowdery still persistent, and he accordingly gave out a "revelation" to him, telling him again that he must not "write by way of commandment," inasmuch as Smith was at the head of the church, and directing him to "go unto the Lamanites (Indians) and preach my Gospel unto them." This was the first mention of the westward movement of the church which shaped all its later history.

A "revelation" in June, 1829 (Sec. 18), had directed the appointment of the twelve apostles, whom Cowdery and David Whitmer were to select. The organized members now began to inquire who was their leader, and Smith, in a "revelation" dated April 6, 1830 (Sec. 21), addressed to himself, announced: "Behold

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there shall be a record kept among you, and in it thou shalt be called a seer, a translator, a prophet, an apostle of Jesus Christ, an elder of the church through the will of God the Father, and the grace of your Lord Jesus Christ"; and the church was directed in these words, "For his word ye shall receive, as if from mine own mouth, in all patience and faith." Thus was established an authority which Smith defended until the day of his death, and before which

all who questioned it went down.

Some of the few persons who at this time expressed a willingness to join the new church showed a repugnance to being baptized at his hands, and pleaded previous baptism as an excuse for evading it. But Smith's tyrannical power manifested itself at once, and he straightway announced a "revelation" (Sec. 22), in which the Lord declared, "All old covenants have I caused to be done away in this thing, and this is a new and everlasting covenant, even that which was from the beginning."

Five days after the formal organization, the first sermon to the Mormon church was preached in the Whitmer house by Oliver Cowdery, Smith probably concluding that it would be wiser to confine himself to the receipt of "revelations" rather than to essay pulpit oratory too soon. Six additional persons were then baptized. Soon after this the first Mormon miracle was performed -- the casting out of a devil from a young man named, Newel Knight.

The first conference of the organized church was held at Fayette, New York, in June, 1830, with about thirty members present. In recent "revelations" the prophet had informed his father and his brothers Hyrum and Samuel that their calling was "to exhortation and to strengthen the church," so that they were provided for in the new fold.

The region in New York State where the Smiths had lived and were well known was not favorable ground for their labors as church officers, conducting baptisms and administering the sacrament. When they dammed a small stream in order to secure a pool for an announced baptism, the dam was destroyed during the night. A Presbyterian sister-in-law of Knight, from whom a devil had been cast, announced her conversion to Smith's church, and, when she would not listen to the persuasions of her pastor, the latter obtained legal authority from her parents and carried

her away by force. She succeeded, however, in securing the

wished-for baptism. All this stirred up public feeling against Smith, and he was arrested on a charge of disorderly conduct.

At the trial testimony was offered to show that he had obtained a horse and a yoke of oxen from his dupes, on the statement that a "revelation" had informed him that he was to have them, and that he had behaved improperly toward the daughters of one of these men. But the parties interested all testified in his favor, and the prosecution failed. He was immediately rearrested on a warrant and removed to Colesville, amid the jeers of the people in attendance. Knight was subpoenaed to tell about the miracle performed on him, and Smith's old character of a money-digger was ventilated; but the court found nothing on which to hold him. Mormon writers have dilated on these "persecutions," but the outcome of the hearings indicated fair treatment of the accused by the arbiters of the law, and the indignation shown toward him and his associates by their neighbors was not greater than the conduct of such men in assuming priestly rights might evoke in any similar community.

Smith returned to his home in Pennsylvania after this, and endeavored to secure the cooperation of his father-in-law in his church plans, but without avail. It was four years later that Mr. Hale put on record his opinion of his son-in-law already quoted. Failing to find other support in Harmony, and perceiving much public feeling against him, Smith prepared for his return to New York by receiving a "revelation" (Sec. 20) which directed him to return to the churches organized in that state after he had sold his crops. "They shall support thee," declared the "revelation;" but if they receive thee not I shall send upon them a cursing instead of a blessing." For Smith's protection the Lord further declared: "Whosoever shall lay their hand upon you by violence ye shall command to be smitten in my name, and behold, I will smite them according to your words, *in my own due time*. And whosoever shall go to law with thee shall be cursed by the law." This threat, it will be noted, was safeguarded by not requiring immediate fulfillment.

Smith returned to Fayette in September, and continued church work thereabouts in company with his brothers and John and David Whitmer.

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Meanwhile Parley P. Pratt had made his visit to Palmyra and returned to Ohio, and in the early winter Rigdon set out to make his first open visit to Smith, arriving in December. Martin Harris, on the ground that Rigdon was a regularly authorized clergyman, tried to obtain the use of one of the churches of the town for him, but had to content himself with the third-story hall of the Young Men's Association. There Rigdon preached a sermon to a small audience, principally of non-Mormons, announcing himself as a "messenger of God." The audience regarded the sermon as blasphemous, and no further attempt was made to secure this room for Mormon meetings. Rigdon, however, while in conference with Smith, preached and baptized the neighborhood, and Smith and Harris tried their powers as preachers in barns and under a tree in the open air.

A well-authenticated story of the manner in which one of the Palmyra Mormons received his call to preach is told by Tucker¹ and verified by the principal actor. Among the first baptized in New York State were Calvin Stoddard and his wife (Smith's sister) of Macedon. Stoddard told his neighbors of wonderful things he had seen in the sky, and about his duty to preach. One night, Steven S. Harding, a young man who was visiting the place, went with a companion to Stoddard's house, and awakening him with knocks on the door, proclaimed in measured tones that the angel of the Lord commanded him to "go forth among the people and preach the Gospel of Nephi." Then they ran home and went to bed. Stoddard took the call in all earnestness, and went about the next day repeating to his neighbors the words of the "celestial messenger," describing the roaring thunder and the musical sounds of the angel's wings that accompanied the words. Young Harding, who participated in this joke, became Governor of Utah in 1862, and incurred the bitter enmity of Brigham Young and the church by denouncing polygamy, and asserting his own civil authority.²

As a result of Smith's and Rigdon's conferences came a "revelation" to them both (Sec. 35), delivered as in the name

¹ "Origin, Rise and Progress of Mormonism," pp. 80, 285

² Stoddard and Smith had a quarrel over a lot in Kirtland in 1835, and Smith knocked down his brother-in-law and was indicted for assault and battery, but was acquitted on the ground of self-defence.

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of Jesus Christ, defining somewhat Rigdon's position. How nearly it met his demands cannot be learned, but it certainly granted him no more authority than Smith was willing to concede. It told him that he should do great things, conferring the Holy Ghost by the laying on of hands, as did the apostles of old, and promising to show miracles, signs, and wonders unto all believers. He was told that Joseph had received the "keys of the mysteries of those things that have been sealed," and was directed to "watch over him that his faith fail not." This "revelation" ordered the retranslation of the Scriptures.

The most important result of Rigdon's visit to Smith was a decision to move the church to Ohio. This decision was promulgated in the form of "revelations" dated December, 1830, and January, 1831, which set forth (Secs. 37, 38): --

"And that ye might escape the power of the enemy, and be gathered unto me a righteous people, without spot and blameless:

"Wherefore, for this cause I give unto you the commandment that ye should go to the Ohio; and there I will give unto you my law; and there you shall be endowed with power from on high; and from thence whomsoever I will shall go forth among all nations, and it shall be told them what they shall do; for I have a great work laid up in store, for Israel shall be saved.... And they that have farms that cannot be sold, let them be left or rented as seemeth them good."

A sufficient reason for the removal was the failure to secure converts where Smith was known, and the ready acceptance of the new belief among Rigdon's Ohio people. The Rev. Dr. Clark says, "You might as well go down in the crater of Vesuvius and attempt to build an icehouse amid its molten and boiling lava, as to convince any inhabitant in either of these towns {Palmyra or

Manchester} that Joe Smith's pretensions are not the most gross and egregious falsehood."¹

The Rev. Jesse Townsend of Palmyra, in a reply to a letter of inquiry about the Mormons, dated December 24, 1833 (quoted in full by Tucker), says: "All the Mormons have left this part of the state, and so palpable is their imposture that nothing is here said or thought of the subject, except when inquiries from abroad are occasionally made concerning them. I know of no one now living in this section of the country that ever gave them credence."

¹ "Gleanings by the Way."

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CHAPTER XIII

THE MORMONS' BELIEFS AND DOCTRINES -- CHURCH GOVERNMENT

The Mormons teach that, for fourteen hundred years to the time of Smith's "revelations," there had been "a general and awful apostasy from the religion of the New Testament, so that all the known world have been left for centuries without the Church of Christ among them; without a priesthood authorized of God to administer ordinances; that every one of the churches has perverted the Gospel."¹ As illustrations of this perversion are cited the doing away of immersion for the remission of sins by most churches, of the laying on of hands for the gift of the Holy Ghost, and of the miraculous gifts and powers of the Holy Spirit. The new church presented a modern prophet, who was in direct communication with God and possessed power to work miracles, and who taught from a Golden Bible which says that whoever asserts that there are no longer "revelations, nor prophecies, nor gifts, nor healing, nor

speaking with tongues and the interpretation of tongues,... knoweth not the Gospel of Christ" (Book of Mormon ix. 7, 8).

It is impossible to decide whether the name "Mormon" was used by Spaulding in his "Manuscript Found," or was introduced by Rigdon. It is first encountered in the Mormon Bible in the Book of Mosiah xviii. 4, as the name of a place where there was a fountain in which Alma baptized those whom his admonition led to repentance. Next it occurs in 3 Nephi v. 20: "I am Mormon, and a pure descendant of Lehi." This Mormon was selected by the "author" of the Bible to stand sponsor for the condensation of the "records" of his ancestors which Smith unearthed. It was discovered very soon after the organization of the Mormon church was announced that the word was of Greek

¹ Orson Pratt's "Remarkable Visions," No. 6.

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derivation, 'uopuw' or 'uopuwv' meaning bugbear, hobgoblin. In the form of "mormo" it is Anglicized with the same meaning, and is used by Jeremy Collier and Warburton.¹ The word "Mormon" in zoology is the generic name of certain animals, including the mandril baboon. The discovery of the Greek origin and meaning of the word was not pleasing to the early Mormon leaders, and they printed in the Times and Seasons a letter over Smith's signature, in which he solemnly declared that "there was no Greek or Latin upon the plates from which I, through the grace of God, translated the Book of Mormon," and gave the following explanation of the derivation of the word: --

"Before I give a definition to the word, let me say that the Bible, in its widest sense, means good; for the Saviour says, according to the Gospel of St. John, 'I am the Good Shepherd'; and it will not be beyond the common use of terms to say that good is amongst the most important in use, and, though known by various names in different languages, still its meaning is the same, and is ever in opposition to bad. We say from the Saxon, good; the Dane, god; the Goth, gods; the German, gut; the Dutch, goed; the Latin, bonus; the Greek, kalos; the Hebrew, tob; the Egyptian, mo. Hence, with the addition of more, or the contraction *mor*, we have the word Mormon, which means literally *more good*.

This lucid explanation was doubtless entirely satisfactory to the persons to whom it was addressed.

In the early "revelations" collected in the "Book of Commandments" the new church was not styled anything more definite than "My Church," and the title-page of that book, as printed in 1833, says that these instructions are "for the government of the Church of Christ." The name "Mormons" was not acceptable to the early followers of Smith, who looked on it as a term of reproach, claiming the designation "Saints." This objection to the title continues to the present day. It was not until May 4, 1834, that a council of the church, on motion of Sidney Rigdon, decided on its present official title, "Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints."

The belief in the speedy ending of the world, on which the title "Latter-Day Saints" was founded, has played so unimportant a part in modern Mormon belief that its prominence as an early tenet of the church is generally overlooked. At no time was there more widespread interest in the speedy second coming of Christ and the

¹ See "Century Dictionary."

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Day of Judgment than during the years when the organization of the Mormon church was taking place. We have seen how much attention was given to a speedy millennium by the Disciples preachers. It was in 1833 that William Miller began his sermons in which he fixed on the year 1843 as the end of the world, and his views not only found acceptance among his personal followers, but attracted the liveliest interest in other sects.

The Mormon leaders made this belief a part of their early doctrine. Thus, in one of the first "revelations" given out by Smith, dated Fayette, New York, September, 1830, Christ is represented as saying that "the hour is nigh" when He would reveal Himself, and "dwell in righteousness with men on earth a thousand years." In

the November following, another "revelation" declared that "the time is soon at hand that I shall come in a cloud, with power and great glory." Soon after Smith arrived in Kirtland a "revelation," dated February, 1831, announced that "the great day of the Lord is nigh at hand." In January, 1833, Smith predicted that "there are those now living upon the earth whose eyes shall not be closed in death until they shall see all these things of which I have spoken" (the sweeping of the wicked from the United States, and the return of the lost tribes to it). Smith declared in 1843 that the Lord had promised that he should see the Son of Man if he lived to be eighty-five (Sec. 130).¹ When Ferris was Secretary of Utah Territory, in 1852-1853, he found that the Mormons were still expecting the speedy coming of Christ, but had moved the date forward to 1870. All through Smith's autobiography and the *Millennial Star* will be found mention of every portent that might be construed as an indication of the coming disruption of this world. As late as December 6, 1856, an editorial in the *Millennial Star* said, "The signs of the times clearly indicate to every observing mind that the great day of the second advent of Messiah is at hand."

As the devout Mohammedan² passes from earth to a heaven of

¹ Speaking of W. W. Phelps's last years in Utah, Stenhouse says: "Often did the old man, in public and in private, regale the Saints with the assurance that he had the promise by revelation that he should not taste of death until Jesus came." Phelps died on March 7, 1872.

² The similarity between Smith's early life and visions and Mohammed's has been mentioned by more than one writer. Stenhouse observes that Smith's mother "was to him what Cadijah was to Mohammed," and that "a Mohammedan writer, in a series of

material bliss, so the Mormons are taught that the Saints, the sole survivors of the day of judgment, will, with resurrected bodies, possess the purified earth. The lengths to which Mormon preachers have dared to go in illustrating this view find a good illustration in

a sermon by Orson Pratt, printed in the Deseret News, Salt Lake City, of August 21, 1852. Having promised that "farmers will have great farms upon the earth when it is so changed," and foreseeing that some one might suggest a difficulty in providing land enough to go round, he met that in this way: --

"But don't be so fast, says one; don't you know that there are only about 197,000,000 of square miles, or about 126,000,000,000 of acres upon the surface of the globe? Will these accommodate all the inhabitants after the resurrection? Yes; for if the earth should stand 8000 years, or 80 centuries, and the population should be a thousand millions in every century, that would be 80,000,000,000 of inhabitants, and we know that many centuries have passed that would not give the tenth part of this; but supposing this to be the number, there would then be over an acre and a half for each person upon the surface of the globe."

By eliminating the wicked, so that only one out of a hundred would share this real estate, he calculated that every Saint "would receive over 150 acres, which would be quite enough to raise manna, flax to make robes of, and to have beautiful orchards of fruit trees."

The Mormon belief is stated by the church leaders to rest on the Holy Bible, the Mormon Bible, and the "Book of Doctrine and Covenants," together with the teachings of the Mormon instructors from Smith's time to the present day. Although the Holy Bible is named first in this list, it has, as we have seen, played a secondary part in the church ritual, its principal use by the Mormon preachers having been to furnish quotations on which to rest their claims for the inspiration of their own Bible and for their peculiar teachings. Mormon sermons (usually styled discourses) rarely, if ever, begin with a text. The "Book of Doctrine and Covenants" "containing," as the title-page declares, "the revelations given to Joseph Smith, Jr., for the building up of the Kingdom of God in the last days," was the directing authority in the church during Smith's life, and still occupies a large place in the church history. An examination of the origin and character of this work will therefore

essays recently published in London, treats of the prophecies concerning the Arabian Prophet, to be found in the Old and New Testaments, precisely as Orson Pratt applied them to the American Prophet."

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shed much light on the claims of the church to special direction from on high.

There is little doubt that this system of "revelation" was an idea of Rigdon. Smith was not, at that time, an inventor; his forte was making use of ideas conveyed to him. Thus, he did not originate the idea of using a "peek-stone," but used one freely as soon as he heard of it. He did not conceive the idea of receiving a Bible from an angel, but readily transformed the Spaniard-with-his-throat-cut to an angel when the perfected scheme was presented to him. We can imagine how attractive "revelations" would have been to him, and how soon he would concentrate in himself the power to receive them, and would adapt them to his personal use.

David Whitmer says, "The revelations, or the Book of Commandments, up to June, 1829, were given through the stone through which the Book of Mormon was translated;" but that after that time" they came through Joseph as a mouthpiece; that is, he would inquire of the Lord, pray and ask concerning a matter, and speak out the revelation, which he thought to be a revelation from the Lord; but sometimes he was mistaken about its being from the Lord."¹ Who drew the line between truth and error has never been explained, but Smith would certainly have resented any such skepticism.

Parley P. Pratt thus describes Smith's manner of receiving "revelations" in Ohio, "Each sentence was uttered slowly and very distinctly, and with a pause between each sufficiently long for it to be recorded by an ordinary writer in long hand."²

These "revelations" made the greatest impression on Smith's followers, and no other of his pretensions seems to have so convinced them of his divine credentials. The story of Vienna Jaques well illustrates this. A Yankee descendant of John Rodgers, living in Boston, she was convinced by a Mormon elder, and joined the church members while they were in Kirtland, taking with her her entire possession, \$1500 in cash. This money, like

that of many other devoted members, found its way into Smith's hands -- and stayed there. But he had taken her into his family, and her support became burdensome to him. So, when the Saints were "gathering"

¹ "Address to Believers in the Book of Mormon."

² Pratt's "Autobiography," p. 65.

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in Missouri, he announced a "revelation" in these words (Sec. 90):

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"And again, verily, I {the Lord} say unto you, it is my will that my handmaid, Vienna Jaques, should receive money to bear her expenses, and go up unto the land of Zion; and the residue of the money may be consecrated unto me, and she be rewarded in mine own due time. Verily, I say unto you, that it is meet in mine eyes that she should go up unto the land of Zion, and receive an inheritance from the hand of the Bishop, that she may settle down in peace, inasmuch as she is faithful, and not to be idle in her days from thenceforth."

The confiding woman obeyed without a murmur this thinly concealed scheme to get rid of her, migrated with the church from Missouri to Illinois and to Utah, and was in Salt Lake City in 18[5]3, supporting herself as a nurse, and "doubly proud that she has been made the subject of a revelation from heaven."¹

These "revelations" have been published under two titles. The first edition was printed in Jackson, Missouri, in 1833, in the Mormon printing establishment, under the title, "Book of Commandments for the Government of the Church of Christ, organized according to Law on the 6th of April, 1830." This edition contained nothing but "revelations," divided into sixty-five "chapters," and ending with the one dated Kirtland, September, 1831, which forms Section 64 of the Utah edition of "Doctrine and Covenants." David Whitmer says that when, in the spring of 1832, it was proposed by Smith, Rigdon, and others to publish these revelations, they were earnestly advised by other members of the church not to do so, as it would be dangerous to let the world get hold of them; and so it

proved. But Smith declared that any objector should "have his part taken out of the Tree of Life."²

Two years later, while the church was still in Kirtland, the "revelations" were again prepared for publication, this time under the title, "Doctrine and Covenants of the Church of the Latter-Day Saints, carefully selected from the revelations of God, and compiled by Joseph Smith, Jr.; Oliver Cowdery, Sidney Rigdon,

¹ "Utah and the Mormons," p. 182.

² It has been stated that the "Book of Commandments" was never really published, the mob destroying the sheets before it got out. But David Whitmer is a very positive witness to the contrary, saying, "I say it was printed complete (and copyrighted) and many copies distributed among the members of the church before the printing press was destroyed."

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F. G. Williams, proprietors." On August 17, 1835, a general assembly of the church held in the Kirtland Temple voted to accept his book as the doctrine and covenants of their faith. Ebenezer Robinson, who attended the meeting, says that the majority of those so voting "had neither time nor opportunity to examine the book for themselves; they had no means of knowing whether any alterations had been made in any of the revelations or not."¹ In fact, many important alterations were so made, as will be pointed out in the course of this story. One method of attempting to account for these changes has been by making the plea that parts were omitted in the Missouri editions. On this point, however, Whitmer is very positive, as quoted.

At the very start Smith's revelations failed to "come true." An amusing instance of this occurred before the Mormon Bible was published. While the "copy" was in the hands of the printer, Grandin, Joe's brother Hyrum and others who had become interested in the enterprise became impatient over Harris's delay in raising the money required for bringing out the book. Hyrum finally proposed that some of them attempt to sell the copyright in Canada, and he urged Joe to ask the Lord about doing so. Joe

complied, and announced that the mission to Canada would be a success. Accordingly, Oliver Cowdery and Hiram Page made a trip to Toronto to secure a publisher, but their mission failed absolutely. This was a critical test of the faith of Joe's followers. "We were all in great trouble," says David Whitmer,² "and we asked Joseph how it was that he received a 'revelation' from the Lord for some brethren to go to Toronto and sell the copyright, and the brethren had utterly failed in their undertaking. Joseph did not know how it was, so he inquired of the Lord about it, and behold, the following 'revelation' came; through the stone: '*Some revelations are from God, some revelations are of man, and some revelations are of the Devil.*'" No rule for distinguishing and separating these revelations was given; but Whitmer, whose faith in Smith's divine mission never cooled, thus disposes of the matter, "So we see that the revelation to go to Toronto and sell the copyright was not of God." Of course, a prophet whose followers would accept such an excuse was certain

¹ In his reminiscences in *The Return*.

² "Address to All Believers in Christ," p. 30.

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of his hold upon them. This incident well illustrates the kind of material which formed the nucleus of the church.

Smith never let the previously revealed word of the Lord protect any of his flock who afterward came in conflict with his own plans. For example: On March 8, 1831, he announced a "revelation"(Sec. 47), saying, "Behold, it is expedient in me that my servant John {Whitmer} should write and keep a regular history" of the church. John fell into disfavor in later years, and, when he refused to give up his records, Smith and Rigdon addressed a letter to him,¹ in connection with his dismissal, which said that his notes required correction by them before publication, "knowing your incompetency as a historian, that writings coming from your pen could not be put to press without our correcting them, or else the church must suffer reproach. Indeed, sir, we

never supposed you capable of writing a history." Why the Lord did not consult Smith and Rigdon before making this appointment is one of the unexplained mysteries.

These "revelations," which increased in number from 16 in 1829 to 19 in 1830, numbered 35 in 1831, and then decreased to 16 in 1832, 13 in 1833, 5 in 1834, 2 in 1835, 3 in 1836, 1 in 1837, 8 in 1838 (in the trying times in Missouri), 1 in 1839, none in 1840, 3 in 1841, none in 1842, and 2, including the one on polygamy, in 1843. We shall see that in his latter days, in Nauvoo, Smith was allowed to issue revelations only after they had been censored by a council. He himself testified to the reckless use which he made of them, and which perhaps brought about this action. The following is a quotation from his diary: --

"May 19, 1842. -- While the election {of Smith as mayor by the city council} was going forward, I received and wrote the following revelation: 'Verily thus saith the Lord unto you my servant Joseph, by the voice of the Spirit, Hiram Kimball has been insinuating evil and forming evil opinions against you with others; and if he continue in them, he and they shall be accursed, for I am the Lord thy God, and will stand by thee and bless thee.' Which I threw across the room to Hiram Kimball, one of the counsellors."

Thus it seems that there was some limit to the extent of Joe's effrontery which could be submitted to.

We shall see that Brigham Young in Utah successfully resisted constant pressure that was put upon him by his flock to continue

¹ *Millennial Star*, Vol. XVI, p. 133.

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the reception of "revelations." While he was prudent enough to avoid the pitfalls that would have surrounded him as a revealer, he was crafty enough not to belittle his own authority in so doing. In his discourse on the occasion of the open announcement of polygamy, he said, "If an apostle magnifies his calling, his words are the words of eternal life and salvation to those who hearken to them, just as much so as any written revelations contained in these

books" (the two Bibles and the "Doctrine and Covenants").

Hiram Page was not the only person who tried to imitate Smith's "revelations." A boy named Isaac Russell gave out such messages at Kirtland; Gladdin Bishop caused much trouble in the same way at Nauvoo; the High Council withdrew the hand of fellowship from Oliver Olney for setting himself up as a prophet; and in the same year the *Times and Seasons* announced a pamphlet by J. C. Brewster, purporting to be one of the lost books of Esdras, "written by the power of God."

In the *Times and Seasons* (p. 309) will be found a report of a conference held in New York City on December 4, 1840, at which Elder Sydney Roberts was arraigned, charged with "having a revelation that a certain brother must give him a suit of clothes and a gold watch, the best that could be had; also saluting the sisters with what he calls a holy kiss." He was told that he could retain his membership if he would confess, but he declared that "he knew the revelations which he had spoken were from God. "So he was thereupon "cut off."

The other source of Mormon belief -- the teachings of their leading men -- has been no more consistent nor infallible than Smith's "revelations." Mormon preachers have been generally uneducated men, most of them ambitious of power, and ready to use the pulpit to strengthen their own positions. Many an individual elder, firm in his faith, has travelled and toiled as faithfully as any Christian missionary; but these men, while they have added to the church membership, have not made its beliefs.

Smith probably originated very little of the church polity, except the doctrine of polygamy, and what is published over his name is generally the production of some of his counsellors. Section 130 of the "Book of Doctrine and Covenants," headed "Important Items of Instruction, given by Joseph the Prophet, April 2, 1843," contains the following: --

"When the Saviour shall appear, we shall see him as he is. We shall see that he is a man like ourselves...."

"The Father has a body of flesh and bones as tangible as man's; the Son also; but the Holy Ghost has not a body of flesh and bones, but is a personage of spirit. Were it not so, the Holy Ghost could not dwell in us."

An article in the *Millennial Star*, Vol. VI, for which the prophet vouched, contains the following: --

"The weakest child of God which now exists upon the earth will possess more dominion, more property, more subjects, and more power in glory than is possessed by Jesus Christ or by his Father; while, at the same time, Jesus Christ and his Father will have their dominion, kingdom and subjects increased in proportion."

One more illustration of Smith's doctrinal views will suffice. In a funeral sermon preached in Nauvoo, March 20, 1842, he said: "As concerning the resurrection, I will merely say that all men will come from the grave as they lie down, whether old or young; there will not be 'added unto their stature one cubit,' neither taken from it. All will be raised by the power of God, having spirit in their bodies but not blood."¹

In "The Latter-Day Saints' Catechism or Child's Ladder," by Elder David Moffat, Genesis v. 1, and Exodus xxxiii. 22, 23, and xxiv. 10 are cited to prove that God has the form and parts of a man.

The greatest vagaries of doctrinal teachings are found during Brigham Young's reign in Utah. In the way of a curiosity the following diagram and its explanation, by Orson Hyde, may be reproduced from the *Millennial Star*, Vol. IX, p. 23: --

"The above diagram shows the order and unity of the Kingdom of God. The eternal Father sits at the head, crowned King of Kings and Lord of Lords. Wherever the other lines meet there sits a king and priest under God, bearing rule, authority and dominion under the Father. He is one with the Father because his Kingdom is joined to his Father's and becomes part of it.... It will be seen by the above diagram that there are kingdoms of all sizes, an infinite variety to suit all grades of merit and ability. The chosen vessels of God are the kings and priests that are placed at the heads of their kingdoms. They have received their washings and anointings in the Temple of God on earth."

Young's ambition was not to be satisfied until his name was

connected with some doctrine peculiarly his own. Accordingly,

¹ *Millennial Star*, Vol. XIX, p. 213.

[facing page 116: Image, not reproduced here]

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in a long sermon preached in the Tabernacle on April 9, 1852, he made this announcement (the italics and capitals follow the official report): --

"Now hear it, O inhabitants of the earth, Jew and Gentile, saint and sinner. When our father Adam came into the Garden of Eden, he came into it with a *celestial body*, and brought Eve, *one of his wives*, with him. He helped to make and organize this world. He is MICHAEL, the *Archangel*, the ANCIENT OF DAYS, about whom holy men have written and spoken.¹ HE is *our FATHER and our GOD, and the only God with whom WE have to do*. Every man upon the earth, professing Christians or non-professing, must hear it and *will know it sooner or later*.... I could tell you much more about this; but were I to tell you the whole truth, blasphemy would be nothing to it, in the estimation of the superstitious and over righteous of mankind.... Jesus, our Elder Brother, was begotten in the flesh by the same character that was in the Garden of Eden, and who is our Father in heaven."²

This doctrine was made a leading point of difference between the Utah church and the Reorganized Church, when the latter was organized, but it is no longer defended even in Utah. The *Deseret Evening News* of March 21, 1900, said on this point, "That which President Young set forth in the discourse referred to is not preached either to the Latter-Day Saints or to the world as apart of the creed of the church."

Young never hesitated to rebuke an associate whose preaching did not suit him. In a discourse in Salt Lake City, on March 8, 1857, he rebuked Orson Pratt, one of the ablest of the church writers, declaring that Pratt did not "know enough to keep his foot out of it, but drowns himself in his philosophy." He ridiculed his doctrine that "the devils in hell are composed of and filled with the Holy

Spirit, or Holy Ghost, and possess all the knowledge, wisdom, and power of the gods," and said, "When I read some of the writings of such philosophers they make me think, 'O dear, granny, what a long tail our puss has got.'"³

The Mormon church still holds that an existing head of that organization can always interpret the divine will regarding any question. This was never more strikingly illustrated than when Woodruff, by a mere dictum, did away with the obligatory character of polygamy.

¹ Young, in a public discourse on October 23, 1853, declared that he rejected the story of Adam's creation as "baby stories my mother taught me when I was a child." But the Mormon Bible (2 Nephi ii. 18-22) tells the story of Adam's fall.

² *Journal of Discourses*, Vol I, pp. 50, 51.

³ *Ibid.*, Vol. IV, p. 297.

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When the Mormons were under a cloud in Illinois, in 1842, John Wentworth, editor of the Chicago Democrat, applied to Smith for a statement of their belief, and received in reply a list of 13 "Articles of Faith" over Smith's signature. This statement was intended to win for them sympathy as martyrs to a simple religious belief, and it has been cited in Congress as proof of their soul purity. But as illustrating the polity of the church it is quite valueless.

The doctrine of polygamy and the ceremonies of the Endowment House will be considered in their proper place. One distinctive doctrine of the church must be explained before this subject is dismissed, namely, that which calls for "baptism for the dead." This doctrine is founded on an interpretation of Corinthians xv. 29: "Else what shall they do which are baptized for the dead, if the dead rise not at all? Why are they then baptized for the dead?"

An explanation of this doctrine in the *Times and Seasons* of May 1, 1841, says: --

"This text teaches us the important and cheering truth that the departed spirit is in a probationary state, and capable of being affected by the proclamation of the Gospel.... Christ offers pardon, peace, holiness, and eternal life to the quick and the dead, the living, on condition of faith and baptism for remission of sins; the departed, on the same condition of faith in person and baptism by a living kinsman in his behalf. It may be asked, will this baptism by proxy necessarily save the dead? We answer, no; neither will the same necessarily save the living."

This doctrine was first taught to the church in Ohio. In later years, in Nauvoo, Smith seemed willing to accept its paternity, and in an article in the Times and Seasons of April 15, x 842, signed "Ed.," when he was its editor, he said that he was the first to point it out. The article shows, however, that it was doubtless written by Rigdon, as it indicates a knowledge of the practice of such baptism by the Marcionites in the second century, and of Chrysostom's explanation of it. A note on Corinthians xv. 29, in "The New Testament Commentary for English Readers," edited by Lord Bishop Ellicott of Gloucester and Bristol (London, 1878), gives the following historical sketch of the practice: --

"There have been numerous and ingenious conjectures as to the meaning of this passage. The only tenable interpretation is that there existed amongst

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some of the Christians at Corinth a practice of baptizing a living person in the stead of some convert who had died before that sacrament had been administered to him. Such a practice existed amongst the Marcionites in the second century, and still earlier amongst a sect called the Cerinthians. The idea evidently was that, whatever benefit flowed from baptism, might be thus vicariously secured for the deceased Christian. St. Chrysostom gives the following description of it: 'After a catechumen (one prepared for baptism but not actually baptized) was dead, they hid a living man under the bed of the deceased; then, coming to the bed of the dead man, they spoke to him, and asked whether he would receive baptism; and, he making no answer, the other replied in his stead, and so they baptized the living for the dead.' Does St. Paul then, by what he here says, sanction the superstitious practice? Certainly not. He carefully separated himself and the Corinthians, to whom he immediately addresses himself, from those who adopted this custom.... Those who do that, and disbelieve a resurrection, refute themselves. This custom possibly sprang up among the Jewish converts, who had been accustomed to something similar in their faith. If a Jew died

without having been purified from some ceremonial uncleanness, some living person had the necessary ablution performed on him, and the dead were so accounted clean."

Other commentators have found means to explain this text without giving it reference to a baptism for dead persons, as, for instance, that it means, "with an interest in the resurrection of the dead."¹ Another explanation is that by "the dead" is meant the dead Christ, as referred to in Romans vi. 3, "Know ye not that so many of us as were baptized into Jesus Christ were baptized into his death?"

This doctrine was a very taking one with the uneducated Mormon converts who crowded into Nauvoo, and the church officers saw in it a means to hasten the work on the Temple. At first families would meet on the bank of the Mississippi River, and some one, of the order of the Melchisedec Priesthood, would baptize them wholesale for all their dead relatives whose names they could remember, each sex for relatives of the same. But as soon as the font in the Temple was ready for use, these baptisms were restricted to that edifice, and it was required that all the baptized should have paid their tithings. At a conference at Nauvoo in October, 1841, Smith said that those who neglected the baptism of their dead "did it at the peril of their own salvation."²

The form of church government, as worked out in the early days, is set forth in the "Book of Doctrine and Covenants." The first

¹ "Commentary by Bishops and Other Clergy of the Anglican Church."

² *Times and Seasons*, Vol. II, p. 578.

officers provided for were the twelve apostles,¹ and the next the elders, priests, teachers, and deacons, Edward Partridge being announced as the first bishop in 1831. The church was loosely governed for the first years after its establishment at Kirtland. A guiding power was provided for in a revelation of March 8, 1833 (Sec. 90), when Smith was told by the Lord that Rigdon and F. G. Williams were accounted as equal with him "in holding the keys of

this last kingdom." These three first held the famous office of the First Presidency, representing the Trinity.

On February 17, 1834 (Sec. 102), a General High Council of twenty-four High Priests assembled at Smith's house in Kirtland and organized the High Council of the church, consisting of Twelve High Priests, with one or three Presidents, as the case might require. The office of High Priest, and the organization of a High Council were apparently an afterthought, and were added to the "revelation" after its publication in the "Book of Commandments." Other forms of organization that were from time to time decided on were announced in a revelation dated March 28, 1835 (Sec. 107), which defined the two priesthoods, Melchisedec and Aaronic, and their powers. There were to be three Presiding High Priests to form a Quorum of the Presidency of the church; a Seventy, called to preach the Gospel, who would form a Quorum equal in authority to the Quorum of the Twelve, and be presided over by seven of their number. Smith soon organized two of these Quorums of Seventies. At the time of the dedications of the Temple at Nauvoo, in 1844, there were fifteen of them, and to-day they number more than 120.

Each separate church organization, as formed, was called a Stake, and each Stake had over it a Presidency, High Priests, and Council of Twelve. We find the meaning of the word "Stake" in some of Smith's earlier "revelations." Thus, in the one dated June 4, 1833, regarding the organization of the church at Kirtland, it was said, "It is expedient in me that this Stake that I have set for the strength of Zion be made strong." Again, in one dated December 16, 1839, on the gathering of the Saints, it is stated, "I have other places which I will appoint unto them, and they shall be called Stakes for the curtains, or the strength of Zion." In Utah, to-day, the Stakes form groups of settlements, and are generally organized on county lines.

¹ (Sec. 18, June, 1829.)

The prophet made a substantial provision for his father, founding for him the office of Patriarch, in accordance with an unpublished "revelation." The principal business of the Patriarch was to dispense "blessings," which were regarded by the faithful as a sort of charm, to ward off misfortune. Joseph, Sr., awarded these blessings without charge when he began dispensing them at Kirtland, but a High Council held there in 1835 allowed him \$10 a week while blessing the church. After his formal anointing in 1836 he was known as Father Smith, and the next year his salary was made \$1.50 a day.¹ Hyrum became Patriarch when his father died in 1840, his brother William succeeded him, his Uncle John came next, and his Uncle Joseph after John. Patriarchal blessings were advertised in the Mormon newspaper in Nauvoo like other merchandise. They could be obtained in writing, and contained promises of almost anything that a man could wish, such as freedom from poverty and disease, life prolonged until the coming of Christ, etc.² In 1875 the price of a blessing in Utah had risen to \$2. The office of Patriarch is still continued, with one chief Patriarch, known as Patriarch of the Church, and subordinate Patriarchs in the different Stakes. The position of Patriarch of the church has always been regarded as a hereditary one, and bestowed on some member of the Smith family, as it is to-day.

¹ The departure of the Patriarch from Ohio was somewhat dramatic. As his wife tells the story in her book, the old man was taken by a constable before a justice of the peace on a charge of performing the marriage service without any authority, and was fined \$3000, and sentenced to the penitentiary in default of payment. Through the connivance of the constable, who had been a Mormon, the prisoner was allowed to leap out of a window, and he remained in hiding at New Portage until his family were ready to start for Missouri. The revelation of January 19, 1841, announced that he was then sitting "with Abraham at his right hand."

² Ferris's "Utah and the Mormons," p. 314, and "Wife No. 19," p. 581.

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