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SIDNEY RIGDON--EARLY MORMON

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INTRODUCTION

Judged by the general standards of intellectual and character measurements, Sidney Rigdon was not a great man. Beyond any question of doubt he was "flighty," very emotional, and mentally unstable. From the evidence at hand it appears that at various intervals he suffered temporarily from insanity. However, he was an active man, an orator of no mean ability, acquainted with the contents of the Bible, and for years he was considered a man of importance by many people.

At most every important period in Rigdon's life one is met with a mass of controversial literature which makes it difficult to determine where he stood on some of the important issues. Moreover, one is handicapped in a study of his activities by the fact that he is still considered an apostate by three different churches; and because of this the various church historians have been tempted to minimize his work while he was a member of their particular group and at the same time sharply criticize some of his actions. Rigdon was a public speaker, but he was not a writer. Thus, the greater part of the material that has been preserved concerning him has come from the pens of those who were hostile toward him or, at least, not sympathetic with his life in general.

But in spite of his humble position in American Church History, and the difficulties in obtaining the facts, Sidney Rigdon is a character worthy of attention. During his lifetime he was a preacher in the Baptist church; later he was closely associated with the founding of three American churches, two of which are powerful bodies at the present time. He was

one of Alexander Campbell's most capable lieutenants; and perhaps no single man wielded so much influence upon Joseph Smith, the Mormon Prophet. Rigdon was one of the many unschooled preachers of America's Early Frontier who fed people "the bread of life." In many respects one sees the social, cultural, and especially, the religious life of that period reflected in his life.

If Rigdon has left anything of lasting importance for the world he made that contribution during the fourteen years (1830-1844) he was a member and high official in the Mormon Church. Therefore, particular attention has been given to that period of his life.

To understand Rigdon one must keep in mind the general characteristics of the religious communities in the sparsely settled districts west of the Alleghany Mountains. What Dr. Shirley Jackson Case has written about Early Christian times, describes in part the religious characteristics of Frontier America during the first half of the Nineteenth Century: "The sky hung low in the ancient world....In Palestine, as elsewhere, the sky was so near to the earth that angels traversed the intervening space with the utmost ease and in a brief period of time." It was not an uncommon thing to hear a good church member relate a supernatural experience "received from the Lord." It was a time when many thousands of people were yearning for the "primitive gospel;" the words "Reformation," "Restoration," and "the ancient order of things" were in the air. Thousands of people believed in the immediate return of Jesus; Ascension Robes were actually sold to pre-Millenarians on sophisticated Broadway. It was a time when the religious layman and the pioneer preacher read the Bible and believed in it literally; the stories of Elijah and Elisha, of the flood, of Babel and the escapades of Samson, of

Jonah and the whale, or the immaculate conception and divine Son-ship of Jesus, did not trouble their minds or disturb their spiritual equilibrium. These stories were all equally true to the religious man of that time because they were found recorded in the "word of God."

Besides the general religious characteristics of the day one must keep clearly fixed in one's mind the religious conceptions which were more or less peculiar to the followers of Joseph Smith if one can hope to sympathetically understand Sidney Rigdon and his work. If it were true that heaven seemed close to the religious man in general, with the Mormons it was a reality. To them God was a glorified man and Jesus Christ was his resurrected Son who was in the "express image of the Father's person." God appeared to their prophet once, and introduced his Son Jesus, who then informed the youthful Prophet that none of the churches was right and that he (J. Smith) was the chosen vessel of the latter days to re-establish Christ's Church upon the earth. Jesus appeared, also, on a few other occasions. Angels appeared more frequently. They revealed the golden plates and the Urim and Thummim, and protected the valuable record and even carried it from one place to another during the Prophet's over-land journey. To expedite matters, an angel performed some of the labour on the Witmer farm and later many angels made their appearance in the Kirtland temple to signify divine approval and acceptance. Besides the personal manifestations of divine beings, the Prophet was frequently in touch with the heavens through the medium of the Holy Spirit. "Through the gift and power of God" he translated an ancient record from "Reformed Egyptian" into the English language. Through divine inspiration he also translated ancient Egyptian papyri.

Divine aid was not limited to the gift of translation. A whole new volume of scripture was given direct to the Prophet from God. This

volume consists of divine sanctions, commands and general information on a great variety of subjects, which range in importance from a command to collect a group of hymns to a description of the three degrees of glory which are found in heaven. The gifts of heaven were not limited to the Prophet only. Others saw angels, heard celestial voices, handled divine records, performed healings, raised the dead, and spoke in tongues and prophesied.

Moreover, according to Mormon theology and experience, all was not of a divine and heavenly nature which expressed itself in the realm of the supernatural. Satan was seen; the powers of the Evil one were turned loose upon the infant church. Immediately preceding "The First Vision," the Prophet was almost "destroyed" by Satan or his emissaries. Devils were as real and personal as were the heavenly messengers. The first miracle in the church was the casting out of an evil spirit from Newell Knight. On that occasion he was caught from the floor and tossed about in the air by the angry spirit in a very realistic fashion. In almost every case where the Mormon missionaries attempted to introduce "the Everlasting Gospel," Satan and his fallen angels stood in the way. In England they fought against the newly arrived missionaries, "who gazed upon them for an hour and a half, while the evil ones foamed and gnashed their teeth upon us...and (we) heard those spirits talk and express their hellish designs against us. However, the Lord delivered us from them and blessed us exceedingly that day." Demonical possession was not altogether a rare phenomenon. One of the early writers, P. P. Pratt, who converted Rigdon, was left a rather detailed account of the symptoms associated with demon possession.

The genuineness and reality of the spiritual experiences enumerated above have never been doubted by devout Mormons. One will search

Mormon literature in vain for a "subjective" explanation of any of the above spiritual phenomena. It is real and genuine just as a horse is real and genuine. The present day Mormon missionary system which keeps approximately two thousand self-supporting missionaries in domestic and foreign lands; the millions of dollars spent on temples, chapels, and church schools, eloquently attest the belief of the Mormons to the actuality of divine manifestation through the channels of their church.

Rigdon was more than an active believer in Mormon claims of supernaturalism; he had visions, performed healings, and interpreted tongues. In short, he was a "Prophet, Seer, and Revelator" of the "Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints." One cannot hope to understand Rigdon or any other Mormon leader, whether past or contemporary, if one ignores the multiplicity of divine claims set forth by the Mormon Church.

Like many another, Rigdon sacrificed and suffered much for the Mormon cause. I believe that in most cases he acted with sincerity, yet here and there he behaved in such a manner as to create doubt in the reader's mind.

Where I have referred to his supernatural claims or to those set forth by his colleagues, I have made no attempt to argue the point or offer a possible explanation. To Rigdon and his followers they were realities, just as they are still accepted as historical realities by the devout Mormons.

CHAPTER I

SIDNEY RIGDON--THE BAPTIST PREACHER

The Rigdons of Europe have been mainly "stay-at-home-people," and the branch that found its way to America in early pre-Revolutionary days has not proved to be prolific. One seldom finds the name in a modern directory; American genealogical records throw little light upon the past activities of the family; and it is seldom one ever sees the name appear in any type or age of literature.

Sidney Rigdon was the youngest son of William and Nancy Rigdon. On the paternal side he was of English extraction; his maternal ancestors came from Scotland and Ireland. His father and mother followed the great tide of western migration which resulted from the distressing economic conditions after the American Revolution. They settled at Piny Fork, Peter's Creek, St. Clair Township, Alleghany County, Pennsylvania. Sidney, their third son, was born at Piny Fork, February 19, 1793. Thus, Sidney Rigdon, who was born in the "way out west" of the late Eighteenth century, was a late contemporary of America's first president, the author of the Declaration of Independence, and most of the men who assembled at the Constitutional Convention.

Rigdon lived to see America fight her second war with England, wrest an Empire from Mexico, and then go through the desperate struggle of a savage civil war. He lived on through the period of national reconstruction and witnessed the last wave of American immigration and pioneers complete the subjugation of the mighty continent which had begun on the Atlantic seaboard two hundred and fifty years before.

During the life of Rigdon (1793-1876) marvellous changes occurred in the field of science and politics which have been of tremendous importance

to America and the world in general, but in the great national and international drama of his time he played a very humble part. In the civil and political life of his time we see him emerge with the titles of "Lawyer" and "Postmaster". At one time he was nominated by a small religious group to be vice-president of the United States. But his interest did not lie in that direction. He was far more concerned with the first century of the Christian era than he was in the nineteenth century. At heart, he was not of this world. Whatever material achievements can be justly credited to his activities, whether it be the establishment of new settlements, encouraging foreign immigration, or the building of temples and highways, one is inclined to believe that such achievements were incidental, and sometimes accidental so far as his main objectives were concerned. Rigdon was primarily interested in the coming of the Lord and in preparing a people to receive Him. In his attempt to find the will of God he began at an early date to study the old prophecies of the Bible; later he added the Book of Mormon to his sacred list, then the Doctrine and Covenants which contain the revelations to Joseph Smith; and as he advanced in life and experience he had many revelations of his own.

Rigdon began life at Piny Creek in an environment common to that of any American pioneer-farmer boy. There was much to be done, no agricultural machinery to assist, and meager profits waiting as the annual reward. Little is known of his childhood and early youth. One of the old records states that he "received a common English education" during his youth. Another account, which was written under his supervision, states that "nothing very remarkable took place in his youthful days; ...he continued at home with his parents, following the occupation of a farmer till he was seventeen years of age, when his father died; after which event he continued on the same farm with his mother, until he was twenty-

six years of age."

Most men have their main life patterns formed before they are twenty-six, and although direct information is not available there is sufficient reason to believe that Rigdon had developed his main bents of character before that date. Many years later an older brother, who was then a physician, permitted the following to be published about Sidney:

When quite a boy, living with his father some fifteen miles south of Pittsburg, he was thrown from a horse. His foot entangling in a stirrup he was dragged some distance before relieved. In this accident he received some concussion of the brain as ever afterward seriously affected his character, and in some respects his conduct....His mental powers did not seem to be impaired, but the equilibrium of his intellectual exertions seems thereby to have been sadly affected. He still manifested great mental activity and power, but was to an equal degree inclined to run into wild visionary views on almost every question.¹

Doubtless the modern psychologist would like to know more about this accident and its immediate effects upon the boy. Twentieth century homicides are saved from the electric chair when it can be proved that they suffered from some similar accident in childhood.² There is a possibility that the above incident described by his brother may be the key to many of the extravagant statements he made in after life; and, in part, account for those short periods of insanity from which he suffered.

However, Sidney Rigdon was not a madman, as some have suggested. As we shall see, he was a man of influence and power in the religious life of those western communities where he resided most of the time. His associates looked upon him as a man of superior abilities in the realm of intellectual activity. It is only when one pieces together all of the strange incidents that occurred over a long period of time that one sees this bizarre aspect of his life playing an important part. Studying his life in units of short intervals one would pay little attention to the minor

1. Baptist Witness, March 1, 1875; quoted by Kennedy in Early Days Of Mormonism, p. 62

2. McCoy in Utah Penitentiary.

fantastical element that might appear. But when one studies his life as a whole one has to guard against over-emphasizing the sensational and unsound because, though always playing a minor role, they continue to appear upon the stage in one form or another.

The biographer is more interested in the early experiences of Rigdon which established his main life patterns. While the lad was in his early adolescence the Second Great Awakening was still in full swing on the Early Frontier. One would like to know how his parents and older associates interpreted the great revival of Kentucky where the fiery evangelists preached the word of the Lord to the assembled thousands. Did his local minister frown when recounting the fact that at these huge camp meetings as many as one thousand were slain by the spirit at the same time? Or did he glow with religious enthusiasm as he told how "the sensible, the weak, etc., learned and unlearned, the rich and the poor were brought to the ground under convictions."¹ One is not left entirely in the realm of fanciful conjecture on this subject. Revivalism was in the air. When it was not in action in a community it was at least a subject of earnest discussion. Pennsylvania had been a state where broad and tolerant views on religion had been permitted from its earliest colonial period, thus leaving an open door to the champions of all creeds and beliefs, many of which were strange mixtures of religious, political and economic Utopias.

Regardless of what his home training might have been on the subject of religion we know that from an early age Rigdon attended church and when he reached his twenty-fourth year he "professed religion" and joined the Regular Baptists, a church that considered conversion as one

1. Sweet, The Story of Religions in America, pp. 330-31.

of its five cardinal doctrines.¹ Rigdon seems to have had little difficulty in receiving the necessary "religious experience" for church membership or the gift of speech to relate it before the congregation, for he was "a natural born orator." It appears that he referred to his "experience" too frequently for even that age in which the miraculous and queer were oftentimes confused with the divine. In later days **Harmon** Sumner expostulated with Rigdon as to his doctrine and said to him: "Brother Rigdon, you never go into a Baptist church without relating your Christian experience."²

Whatever the opinion of Brother Sumner might have been regarding Rigdon's "Christian experience" one feels confident that his pastor, David Phillips, looked upon it with favor; because Rigdon left the farm the following year and went to reside with Reverend Andrew Clark who was a Baptist minister of Beaver County.

The road was not long and arduous to the Baptist ministry of that period. During the winter of his residence with Reverend Andrew Clark (1818-19) he received his licence to preach. In May of the following spring he left Pennsylvania and moved to Warren, Trumbull County, Ohio, where he resided at the home of Adamson Bentley, another Baptist preacher. Within a short time he became an ordained preacher, and, incidentally, the brother-in-law of Bentley.³

The training required of a Baptist minister of that period appears in sharp contrast to the requirements of a well-trained Baptist minister of the twentieth century. In fact the Baptist minister of Rigdon's day was a sharp contrast to the contemporary Presbyterian, Congregational, and

1. The five essential principles are: (a) Separation of church and state, (b) Conversion as a condition of church membership, (c) individual responsibility to God, (d) Congregational church government, and (e) Immersion as the Scriptural form of Baptism.

2. Kennedy, *op. cit.*, p. 63

3. He married Phoebe Brooks 6-12-1820

Episcopal clergymen. However, their lack of training was an asset rather than a serious liability, and to some extent accounts for the success of the Baptist Church on the Early Frontier. The light demands for a trained ministry is better understood when one recalls that Pittsburg of that date was little more than a country town situated a great distance from Philadelphia and the Atlantic seaboard. Jacksonian democracy was soon to reign supreme; "high-falutin'-preachers" who read their sermons were out of joint with the western spirit.

Granting that Rigdon was a little above the average Baptist minister of that period,¹ it still remains that his formal training was very limited. In the main, he was a typical Baptist preacher of that period, and they came,

From the ranks of the people, among whom he was called upon to hold week-day meetings or funerals. He preached on Sunday and not infrequently during the week. He generally was without much education, for not only was there little opportunity for him to obtain an education, but there was a deep-seated prejudice against educated and salaried preachers.²

The experience of early Virginia Baptists in being taxed for the support of irreligious and vicious clergymen, whose only recommendation was that they received a university education, led them to look with suspicion upon the highly educated and to prefer a minister from the ranks of the people earning a support by following secular pursuits....

The process by which a frontier preacher was "raised up" in a church was about as follows: When a "Brother" was impressed that God had called him to preach, he made it known to the church and if, after the church had heard the trial sermon, it approved of his "gifts" a licence was then given him to preach in a small territory, as for instance within the bounds of a single church. After further trial, if his "gifts" proved real, and he gave further evidence of usefulness as a preacher he was then permitted to preach within the bounds of the association. If, on the other hand, his "gifts" as a preacher did not seem to improve, he was advised to make no further attempts to preach....There were two types of Baptist preachers on the frontier, the "licenced" and the "brdained."³

1. Rigdon was perhaps superior in the field of oratory.

2. Oftentimes the Baptist preachers received no pay in this early period; sometimes they received support in the form of salt, corn, wheat, pork, flour, sugar, tallow, whiskey, and occasionally small cash subscriptions. See Sweet, Religion on the American Frontier: The Baptists, p. 37. Rigdon received some aid from the church during his work in the Baptist Church, but I have not been able to discover how much it amounted to annually.

3. Sweet, op. cit., pp. 36-40

If the foregoing is a description of a typical Baptist minister, then one feels certain that Rigdon comes under that heading. His "gift" consisted of a natural bent toward oratory; his general education consisted of what the country district had to offer in those early days; his training for the ministry was little beyond that which he received at the home of Reverend Andrew Clark during the winter months of 1818-1819. From the time he left the home of Clark, Rigdon had little opportunity to pursue anything approaching formal instruction in the field of religion, and most of his associates were like himself--uncultivated men. The exaggerated stories that later arose concerning his education throw more light upon the critical judgment or honesty of the narrators than upon the man Sidney Rigdon.

Whether one wishes to classify him as educated or uneducated this much is certain: He wanted to preach the "true gospel;" he was a good worker; and in a very short time he became a popular preacher. He remained in the neighborhood of Warren, Ohio, from the spring of 1819 until February 1822. During this interval he doubtless came in contact with the community of Shakers who lived in Warren county. This group of religionists with their claims of visions, healings, revelations,¹ speaking in tongues, a workable system of communism, etc., must have deeply impressed him; for in a few years hence while striving with Alexander Campbell to "restore the Ancient Order of things," and still later when he became one of the leaders of Early Mormonism, he became a strong champion of all the above principles which were advocated by the Shakers.

During the same time he and his brother-in-law, Adamson Bentley, must have watched with great interest the activities of the "Reformers" in the Baptist Church. Thomas Campbell and his son Alexander who had been born and

1. Many of the Shaker revelations are preserved in the Western Reserve Historical Society.

educated in Scotland were disturbing the tranquillity of their recently adopted church. Apparently Rigdon and Bentley heard a great deal of the Campbells' activities through the church papers, and at the Association meetings. The boldness and fighting spirit so manifest in Alexander Campbell's writings and speech would naturally have touched a responsive chord in Rigdon. He and Bentley did not wait for Campbell to come to Ohio; they went to him in the spring of 1821. Years afterward Campbell recorded the following as his reminiscence of the event:

In the summer of 1821, while sitting in my portico after dinner, two gentlemen in the costume of clergymen, as they are technically called, appeared in my yard, advancing to the house. The elder of them, on approaching me, first introduced himself, saying, "My name, sir, is Adamson Bentley; this is Elder Sidney Rigdon, both of Warren, Ohio"...After tea in the evening, we commenced, and prolonged our discourse till the next morning....On parting the next day, Sidney Rigdon, with all apparent candor, said if he had within the last year taught and promulgated from the pulpit one error, he had a thousand. At that time he was the great orator of the Ashoning Association, though in authority with the people second always to Adamson Bentley. I found it expedient to caution them not to begin to pull down anything they had built until they had reviewed again and again what they had heard; nor even then rashly and without much consideration. Fearing they might undo their influence with the people, I felt constrained to restrain rather than to urge them on in the work of reformation....They went on their way rejoicing, and in the course of a single year prepared the whole association to hear us with earnestness and candor.¹

Rigdon returned to Warren with renewed enthusiasm to preach the gospel, and with a warm spot in his heart for the "Reformation" and "Restoration" ideas of Alexander Campbell which had been imparted to him during that long conference which had lasted from evening until dawn. However, he did not permit the "heretical" ideas to crowd out the five cardinal principles so dear to the Baptists, for in February (1822) he answered a "Call," left Warren, and took the pastoral charge of the First Baptist Church of Pittsburg.

Whenever a country clergyman is "Called" to take charge of a city

1. Millennial Harbinger (1848), p. 523; also, Kennedy, op. cit. pp. 64-65.

church one is generally safe in interpreting the change as an advancement. In 1822 Pittsburg was a small city, but the little village of Warren was far smaller. Rigdon had taken a step forward in the eyes of his associates.

At the time he commenced his labors in that church, and for some time before, the church was in a very low state and much confusion existed in consequence of the conduct of their former pastor. However, soon after Elder Rigdon commenced his labors there was a pleasing change effected, for by his incessant labors and his peculiar style of preaching the church was crowded with anxious listeners. The number of members rapidly increased, and it soon became one of the most respectable churches in that city, and all classes and persuasions sought his society.¹

The pleasant state described above was not destined to last for long. Sidney Rigdon soon became "troubled and perplexed in mind with the idea that the doctrines maintained in that society were not altogether in accordance with the scriptures." In fact this is the most disturbing element in his entire life, i. e., finding a society that was "altogether in accordance with the scriptures." Within two and one-half years Rigdon found himself entirely out of harmony with the Baptist Church. His "peculiar style of preaching" caused greater alarm among the faithful in Pittsburg than it had among the broader and more easy-going orthodoxy found in Warren. Then, too, one suspects that Rigdon was giving too much attention to Alexander Campbell and his "liberal" monthly, the Christian Baptist, with its catch words "Reformation" and later, "Restoration" and to its forward look for better things to come.

When the association met at Pittsburg in 1824, "some charges were brought against him for not being sound in the faith; brought him to trial, but denied him the liberty of speaking in self-defense, and he declared a non-fellowship with them."² Another account which was written by Joseph

1. Journal of History, III, No. 1, 7.

2. From a sworn statement by Carvil Rigdon and Peter Boyer, January 27, 1843.

Smith, and doubtless under the direction of Rigdon, omits the account of the "heresy trial" and states that:

Truth was his pursuit, and for truth he was prepared to make every sacrifice in his power. After mature deliberation, deep reflection, and solemn prayer to his heavenly Father, the resolve was made, and the important step was taken. (Aug. 1824). . . As he could no longer uphold the doctrines taught and maintained by it (Baptist Church). This announcement was like a clap of thunder. Amazement seized the congregation, which was then collected, which at last gave way in a flood of tears. It would be in vain to attempt to describe the feelings of the church on that occasion, who were zealously attached to their beloved pastor, or the feelings of their minister. On his part it was indeed a struggle of principle over affection and kindness.¹

Devoid of all literary embellishment, the facts seem to be that Rigdon's "peculiar preaching" brought about a church trial at an annual meeting of the Association. He withdrew because he honestly felt that his style of preaching was nearer the standards of the New Testament than was the doctrine which was championed by the orthodox group. Moreover, church trials generally appear unjust to the one who is disciplined severely. Rigdon repeated this experience on two later occasions. The pattern is merely being formed at this time. He follows it logically throughout his life. Moreover, he was not alone in being checked-up for loose preaching. "Soon (after 1823) groups of Reformers were to be found in almost every Baptist congregation in the West."²

At this time Rigdon had a wife and three children to support. Breaking with the dominant church in a community where one is well known is rarely conducive toward one's economic betterment, and this is especially true in the case of a minister. But when Rigdon made up his mind on a question of religion he could not give in even though the consequences were certain to be against his own good and the happiness of his family. In this particular case it appears to be a question of prin-

1. Journal of History, III, No. 1, 7-8.

2. Sweet, The Story of Religions in America, p. 343.

ciple with him; later, similar occasions arose wherein one is inclined to interpret his action as resulting from an innate stubbornness that would not admit a mistake or receive discipline.

Whether people like or dislike his withdrawal from the church, they had to admit that he did not run away from the scene of battle. He remained in Pittsburg for two more years earning his living by the sweat of the brow. Rigdon became a journeyman tanner for his wife's brother, Mr. Brooks. If he had remained engaged in this humble occupation he would have saved himself much agony of mind and body, his family would have been spared much sorrow resulting from public humiliation, and at times financial distress. But Rigdon felt that "woe is unto me if I preach not the gospel," so he gradually pushed out into a current that eventually flowed too rapidly for him. When the rapids appeared he was unwilling to turn the helm over to a stronger arm and eventually he suffered complete shipwreck, dying a bitter old man.

But, regardless of what the future had in store for him, he had to preach; the desire for oratorical display and expression was like a burning within his bones. He still had a few earnest followers in Pittsburg who liked his "peculiar preaching," so we next find him obtaining permission to hold meetings in the court house. "Campbellism," as yet, had not openly broken with the Baptist body; but Rigdon preached the doctrine which had been guardedly presented to the public by Alexander Campbell for several years, and which eventually became the main tenets of the Disciples Church, viz., faith, repentance, and baptism by immersion for the remission of sins. In short he was teaching a "Restoration of the ancient order of things" as it had been introduced to him by Alexander Campbell in that all-night conference of 1821. Thus we see Campbell's disciple preaching his doctrine was of "Restoration" while the main author of the doctrine was still within the Baptist fold preparing

a great following through his writings in the Christian Baptist.

CHAPTER II

SIDNEY RIGDON----THE "CAMPBELLITE" PREACHER

It is not correct to think of Rigdon withdrawing his membership from the Baptist church in August 1824 and entering the "Campbellite" church; for Campbell, himself, was nominally a member of the Baptist Church until 1830. It seems impossible at this late period to discover the main details of the theological disputes in Pittsburg which caused Rigdon to drop the active leadership of the First Baptist Church in that city, but there is sufficient evidence to warrant the general statement that it was due to his preaching the doctrines set forth by Campbell in the Christian Baptist. Rigdon was teaching the "Restoration of the Ancient Order of Things" and the Redstone Baptist Association began taking a stand against such "Reformers" as early as 1823.

After Thomas Campbell and his son Alexander withdrew from the Presbyterian Church in 1811 they formed the "Brush Run Church" which was a free lance organization until 1813, at which date they united with the Redstone Baptist Association. The Brush Run Church had not been anxious for this union, but when some of the Baptists learned that the apostate Presbyterians, under the leadership of the Campbells, had declared themselves for immersion, they urged them to join the Redstone Association in spite of the fact that both parties were not fully agreed upon the purpose and efficacy of baptism and the Lord's Supper. However, insistent and genuine as the invitation might have been, it was not general throughout the Association.

There were Baptists who never extended to him (Campbell) the hand of fellowship. They regarded him as a religious innovator and adventurer, without responsibility or conscience, who had no other purpose than to build up a new sect upon the ruins of the Baptist denomination. Charges of inconsistency and dishonesty were freely lodged against him, for occupying what was thought to be an equivocal position, namely, maintaining outward fellowship

with the body of people with whom he was not in full agreement. Alexander Campbell's standing among Baptists had been in doubt from the moment of his union with them. He made no secret of his disagreement with many Baptist opinions and practices. He hoped to be able, however, to lead them as a people upon "higher ground," as he termed it. He did not reckon sufficiently with the intensity of their convictions or the firmness of their persuasion that they were nearer right than any other people.¹

In brief, although Alexander Campbell was recognized by the Baptists as one of their most capable leaders, having been chosen by them to defend their principles in public debate against Walker (1820) and McCalla (1823), yet they saw the consequences of his liberal teaching and became determined to oust him from the Redstone Association in 1823. But it appears that Campbell was more determined to remain within the Baptist church than he had been to enter their fold at the beginning. Learning in advance that his opponents were preparing a charge of heresy against him which would be presented at the annual Association meeting in 1823, he immediately proposed to the Brush Run Church to give him and others letters of honourable dismissal from the Brush Run Church. This was done, and he and his friends then proceeded to form a church in Wellsburg. In the meantime the Wellsburg church applied for admission into the Mahoning Association in Ohio, and was accordingly accepted.²

Neither Thomas Campbell nor his son desired to create another religious sect. They claimed that "all had the right to differ but not to divide." They remained within the Mahoning Association until 1830 when due to activities of the "Reformer" preachers the Association dissolved and practically its entire membership united in forming the Disciples Church.

In order to understand how Campbell could change his membership from the Redstone Association where action was under way to drop him and his associates, and go directly into the Mahoning Association where he was welcomed without taking a new stand or recanting his past views, requires a brief explanation.

1. Gates, Baptists and Disciples, p. 51.

2. Moore, History of the Disciples, p. 163

Associations among the Baptists are voluntary unions of churches, for the mutual encouragement, for counsel in church affairs, and for protection against heresy and impostors. Each church is entitled to three representative messengers, who bring with them a written statement of its creed. If this document is orthodox, or in harmony with the accepted standards of faith, the church is received by a plurality vote, upon which the moderator gives the right hand of fellowship to its messengers, and bids them to a seat.¹

The Mahoning Association had been formed in 1820. From the very beginning it had been far more tolerant than its ecclesiastical ancestry, the Redstone and the Wooster Associations. The Redstone Association had accepted the Philadelphia Confession among "its accepted standards of faith" which was decidedly Calvinistic in tone. There was an absence of this in the Mahoning Association, thus Campbell could say in behalf of himself and his followers when their opponents in the Baptist church attacked them:

I have no faith in the Divine right of Associations; yet to shield me from such far-off and underhand attacks....I and the church with which I am connected are in "Full Communion" with the Mahoning Association of Ohio; and through them with the whole Baptist Society in the United States; and I do intend to continue in connection with this people so long as they will permit me to say what I believe, to teach what I am assured of, and to censure what is amiss in their views and practices. I have no idea of adding to the catalogue of new sects.²

Perhaps no other Baptist Association in America would have accepted the "statement of belief" which was presented to the Mahoning Association in 1824 by the "messengers" from the Wellsburg church. But the Mahoning Association received the messengers for the following reasons: (First) From the date of its formation in 1820 it had been very liberal. (Second) The Walker and McCalla debates had established a friendly relationship between some of the Baptists of that district and the opinions of Mr. Campbell. (Third) As a result of the Walker debate, Adamson Bentley and Sidney Rigdon, two preachers of the Association had made a journey to Mr. Campbell's home and during a long interview with him they learned his views on the "Restoration of the

1. Hayden, History of the Disciples in the Western Reserve, pp. 25, 31.

2. Christian Baptist, Jan. 17, 1826; also, Gates, op. cit. p. 51.

Ancient Order of Things" and in the words of Campbell, "in the course of a single year prepared their whole Association to hear us with earnestness and candor."¹ (Fourth) Bentley and Rigdon invited Campbell to attend various "ministers' meetings." Campbell has written that "These meetings were not appreciated too highly, as the sequel developed, inasmuch as they disabused the minds of the Baptist ministry in the Mahoning Association of much prejudice, and prepared the way for a great change of views and practice all over the 3,000,000 acres of the nine counties which constitute the Western Reserve."²

Beyond any question of doubt, Rigdon and his brother-in-law, Bentley, were the men who prepared the way for Campbell in the Mahoning Association. As we have stated in the last Chapter, Rigdon was called to take charge of the First Baptist Church in Pittsburg in 1822 where he remained until his preaching was checked by the Redstone Association in 1824. At which time it seems that his little group and another small communion led by Walter Scott united and began teaching the "Ancient order of things" outside the fold of the Baptist Church. This same association would have ousted Alexander Campbell and his Brush Run Church in 1823 if he had not withdrawn their membership.

Rigdon's relatives in a sworn statement have recorded that after his withdrawal from the Baptist Association in Pittsburg he "began to preach Campbellism, and he and they that joined with him got the liberty of the court house and there they held their meetings... (In) the winter of 1827-28³ he moved into the Western Reserve in Ohio and there continued to preach till the Latter Day Saints came to that part of the country."⁴

1. Richardson, Memories of Alexander Campbell, p. 45

2. Ibid., p. 46

3. He apparently attended the annual Mahoning Association meetings. (See p. 27).

4. Journal of History, III, No. 1, 4.

Until 1823, when the Baptist Witness was published, Campbell's distinctive views were not widely known. Among many of the Western Baptists he had been looked upon as their champion as a result of his Walker and McCalla debates. But, as we have seen, in the case of Bentley and Rigdon, he had friends who were well acquainted with his views which he had taught to their respective congregations as early as 1821. However, as late as 1825, there were only three churches that had accepted his "Restoration" ideas sufficiently to be looked upon as in agreement with the other liberal Baptist churches. These three were the Brush Run, Wellsburg, and Pittsburg churches.¹ Campbell had been personally responsible for the change in the first two; but his lieutenant, Sidney Rigdon, who had been called to Pittsburg in 1822 through the influence of Campbell must have been the main factor in bringing about the change in the latter place, even though Disciple historians are strangely but uniformly silent on the subject, or else guide the reader's attention to Walter Scott, the school teacher who first met Campbell in 1821.² At that time Scott was but twenty-three and unmarried; Rigdon was a family man ten years his senior and had been an active preacher for several years. If Rigdon had not been the prime mover in the direction of change he would not have found himself so far out of harmony with the Association that it was necessary for him to withdraw in 1824.

It is difficult to rescue Rigdon's early work in the "Campbellite" movement and give him credit for that which he justly deserves. Before historians began to write books on the early leaders of the "Restoration," Rigdon had apostatized. Those who knew him best either ignored his contributions because of their hostility toward him or they credited it to his early associates who "endured to the end." But when Hayden wrote his History of the Disciples in the Western Reserve, a book that contains

1. Grafton, Life of Alexander Campbell, p. 117.
 2. Baxter, Life of Walter Scott, p. 64.

many short biographies of the early leaders of "The Restoration," and also numerous sketches of the beginnings of various "Campbellite" churches, it was well nigh impossible to ignore the name of Sidney Rigdon. As we have stated, Rigdon and Bentley had introduced the teaching of Campbell to the people of the Western Reserve in 1821 and actually prepared the way for his entrance into the Mahoning Association. After Rigdon returned to the Western Reserve in 1826 he was invited to preach a funeral sermon at Mentor. His eloquence so impressed the people that he was urged to become their pastor. He accepted their invitation, but as the following excerpts from Hayden's book well indicate, he did not limit his activity to that village:

In August, 1826, the Mahoning Baptist Association was held in Canfield, then in Trumbull County....Adamson Bentley was the moderator, and Joab Gaskill, clerk. Among the ministers in attendance were A. Bentley; Thomas Campbell and Alexander Campbell, of Virginia; Walter Scott, of Pittsburg; Sidney Rigdon, etc. P. 35 (The following day) The Congregational meetinghouse... was procured for Sunday.....Rigdon and Scott preached in the morning. Some having heard the eloquent preacher from Pittsburg, left the meeting supposing they had heard Mr. Campbell, whose name had already become famous. P. 56, Besides these accredited messengers (for the 1827 Association meeting) the following preachers were present, who, by a resolution of the Association, were invited to a seat in its counsels: Walter Scott, Samuel Holms, William West, and Sidney Rigdon. P. 47, The preachers present composing this committee, were the following: A. Bentley.. A. Campbell.. Walter Scott.. Sidney Rigdon.. p. 92, There were three brothers, Thomas, John, and Charles, all Baptist ministers... They were cousins of the famous Sidney Rigdon. (Thomas served a term in the Ohio State Legislature). March 4th (1820) Sidney Rigdon was received into membership, and licensed April 1st, to preach...After two years he moved to Pittsburg. P. 191, the death of Warner Goodall, of Mentor, in June 1826, was the occasion of calling Sidney Rigdon, then residing in Brainbridge, to preach his funeral sermon. The church called Rigdon as its pastor in the fall of that year...Sidney Rigdon was an orator of no inconsiderable abilities. P. 196, In March, 1828, in the great religious awakening in Mentor, under Bentley and Rigdon, the amiable M. S. Clapp was the first to yield. P. 204, Rigdon coming in about that time (to Waite Hill)...by his earnest and animating appeals, several were baptized. P. 238, Sidney Rigdon was their (the Mantua Church) stated, though not constant, minister. P. 239, Soon after this the great Mormon defection came on us. Sidney Rigdon preached for us, (Mantua) and notwithstanding his extravagantly wild freaks, he was held in high repute by many. P. 240, In the admiration of Sidney Rigdon, Oliver Snow and his family shared very largely. P. 294, Sidney Rigdon, a preacher among the Disciples, of great eloquence and power, had joined them (the Mormons) and commenced preaching their doctrine. P. 306, In the great reformatory movement under Bentley and Rigdon, in 1828, he (Isaac Lee) saw the great difference between Christianity as a unity, as contained in the Holy Scriptures and organized "Branch" of the church. P. 334, Late in the spring of 1828, Thomas Campbell

and Sidney Rigdon had preached a few discourses in Shalerville, taught the people the way of life, and baptized two young men. P. 346, The Church of Christ in Perry was organized by S. Rigdon, August 7, 1829....The exclusion of Parmlly hastened matters to a crisis. Rigdon soon was there, and a church was formed, bringing into it a large number of Baptist members, etc. P. 465, Birmingham, Erie Co.,- Began in 1829 by Clapp and Rigdon, etc. P. 467, Elyria, Lorain Co.--It began in the tour of Clapp and Rigdon in 1829. P. 468, This church originated in the labors of Rigdon and Collins. P. 163, Among the seniors were Thomas Campbell and his son Alexander, Adamson Bentley and Sidney Rigdon, with Walter Scott, to whom multitudes of the young disciples looked with the affection of children to a spiritual father. P. 192, Sidney Rigdon was an orator of no inconsiderable abilities. In person, he was of full medium height, rotund in form; of countenance, while speaking, open and winning, with a little cast of melancholy. His action was graceful, his language copious, fluent in utterance, with articulation clear and musical. Yet he was an enthusiast and unstable. His personal influence with an audience was very great. He was just the man for an awakening. He was an early reader of the Christian Baptist, and admiring its strong and progressive teaching, he circulated the paper, and brought out its views in his sermons. Whatever may be justly said of him after he had surrendered himself a victim and a leader of the Mormon delusion, it would scarcely be just to deny sincerity and candor to him, previous to the time when his bright star became permanently eclipsed under that dark cloud. (In the following incidents the reader feels that Hayden is giving a faithful picture of Rigdon "in action"). P. 490, Soon afterwards, meeting Rigdon in Mentor, she (Mrs. Dille of Euclid) related the conversation to him. He remarked: "I will go up and take their deacons from them." In the autumn of 1829, he came, preached a few days, and baptized (nine). Rigdon, taking Luther Dille's hand, said: "Will you not go with these young converts and take care of them?" "I will." This was his charge; a happy one to him, and blessed to hundreds, etc. P. 174, The work in Bro. Scott's hands had prospered so far beyond expectation, that only one feeling prevailed on the question of re-appointing him...(after discussing the arguments pro and con he continues)...Rigdon, who had taken no part in this discussion, becoming weary of it said: "You are consuming too much time on this question. One of the old Jerusalem preachers would start out with his hunting shirt and moccasins, and convert half the world while you are discussing and settling plans!" Upon this, Bro. Scott arose with a genial smile, and remarked: "Brethren, give me my Bible, my head, and Bro. William Hayden, and we will go out and convert the world." Then Rigdon, "I move that we give Bro. Scott his Bible, his Head, and Bro. William Hayden." It was settled in a few moments, as Rigdon's resolution was seconded and passed unanimously.¹

It is quite evident from the above excerpts that Rigdon was active in the movement headed by Campbell. His eloquence went further than merely creating religious unrest; he organized churches and baptized many people.

The Christian Baptist states that "Bishops Scott, Rigdon and Bentley, in Ohio, within the last six months have immersed about 800 persons." Joseph Smith's account of Rigdon's success during this period of his life is quite flattering:

1. The above selections from Hayden's book are very significant in view of the fact that the book betrays a severe hostility towards him in many places.

He (Rigdon) commenced to baptize, like John of old, there flocked to him people from all the region round about....Whole societies threw away their creeds and articles of faith and became obedient to the faith he promulgated....He was a welcome visitor wherever he traveled-- his society was courted by the learned and the intelligent, and the highest ecomiums were bestowed upon him for his biblical lore and eloquence. The work of the ministry occupied all his time and attention...The prospect of wealth and affluence was fairly open before him; but he looked upon it with indifference....His family consisted of his wife and six children, and lived in a very small, unfinished frame house, hardly capable of making a family comfortable.... After he had labored in that vicinity (Mentor) for some time, and having received but little pecuniary aid, the members of the church which he had built up, held a meeting to take his circumstances into consideration...and place him in a position suitable to the high and important office which he sustained in the church....The committee soon made a purchase of a farm... made contracts for erecting a suitable dwelling house, stable, barns, etc., and soon made a commencement on the house, and had a quantity of the building materials on the spot.¹

At this late date it is impossible to say how wide spread were the activities of Rigdon or how important his contributions to the "Campbellite" cause; but at the time when the following statements were made they were very likely not far from the truth:

There was at the time of his separation from the church (at Pittsburg) a gentleman of the name of Alexander Campbell....who has since obtained considerable notoriety in the religious world....There was also another gentleman, by the name of Walter Scott, who separated from the same about that time... 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....The reason why they were called Campbellites was in consequence of Mr. Campbell's publishing the periodical above mentioned (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 that sect than Elder Rigdon.²

Rigdon is reported as having once said, "I have done as much in this reformation as Campbell or Scott, and yet they get all the honor of it!"³

The above claims do not appear like wild exaggerations when one remembers that Rigdon, according to his opponent's statements, was "an orator of no inconsiderable abilities...sincere...and just the man for an awakening."⁴ The following brief recapitulation of his activities and associations in the "Reformation" movement further his claims which are

1. Journal of History, III, No. 1, 12.

2. Ibid., No. 1, p. 8

3. Hayden, op. cit., p. 299

4. Ibid., p. 192

generally ignored: (First) Rigdon and his brother-in-law, Bentley, were the first to introduce Campbell's teachings in the Mahoning Association; and by inviting him to attend the ministers meetings, removed the prejudice which many of the Baptist preachers had against him.¹ (Second) Rigdon was on intimate terms with brother Alexander Campbell and his father, Thomas Campbell. It was through Alexander Campbell's influence that Rigdon was induced to leave Ohio and accept a call, in 1822, to the First Baptist Church of Pittsburg.² In 1823, Rigdon made a journey of three hundred miles with A. Campbell into Kentucky where the famous debate was held with McCalla. The publication of this debate was made from the notes which had been kept by Rigdon and A. Campbell.³ (Third) Through combining with a small group that was led by Walter Scott, Rigdon's followers in Pittsburg constituted the third church to declare itself for the "Reformation" ideas begun by Campbell. The other two were under the direct attention of Mr. Campbell, i. e., the Wellsburg and Brush Run churches.⁴ (Fourth) Rigdon was a recognized leader at all the Mahoning Association meetings from the time Campbell entered the Association until he (Rigdon) joined the Mormons.⁵ (Fifth) In general, Rigdon was on intimate terms with Walter Scott, Thomas Campbell, Alexander Campbell, and Adamson Bentley, the recognized leaders of the so-called "Reformation Movement." In training and scholarship he was at least equal to Bentley; in the type of native eloquence that was so effective among the frontier churches, he may have had no superior in the entire group.

1. Campbell, Memoirs, pp. 44-46

2. Ibid., p. 47; Jennings, Origin and Early History of Disciples of Christ pp. 157-8

3. Campbell, Memoirs, pp. 71, 95

4. Grafton, op. cit., pp. 105, 117

5. Hayden, op. cit., pp. 24, 35, 57, 163, 174, etc. Campbell, Memoirs, pp. 173-4.

Rigdon was invited as usual to take a seat at the Association meeting.

The various articles and chapters in books and periodicals that have been written to explain Rigdon's sudden conversion to Mormonism would fill volumes. In the light of his busy life among the "Reformers" it is preposterous to say that he was conniving with Joseph Smith during this period in the State of New York. However, a chapter will discuss the question in detail. The truth of the matter was, that in the mind of Rigdon, and many other "Reformers", Mormonism was the logical and scriptural step to take.

The people had become tired of theological arguments that revolved around the names of Calvin and Arminius. Campbell had declared himself to be against formal creeds. At an early date Thomas Campbell had said "Where the Bible speaks we speak and where the Bible is silent we are silent." Campbell and his preachers were not asking the questions, "Do you believe that salvation is free and unmerited," or "Do you believe that Christ tasted death for every man," or "Do you believe that you are totally depraved and utterly helpless to turn to God without His previous power?" They merely asked the listener, "Do you believe in the Lord Jesus Christ," if so "Arise and be baptized and wash away your sins."¹ Baptism by immersion for the remission of sins was a new teaching even to most Baptists. Campbell claimed that the Christian world had drifted far from the teaching of the New Testament. He stood for a "Restoration" of the Ancient "Order of things", and by using the New Testament as a guide to bring about this "Restoration" or "Reformation" he hoped to unite Christendom. Whatever his aims, he did not dissolve sectarianism, but founded another sect in 1830 which became known as the "Disciples".

The movement, as we have seen, was chiefly among the Baptists. Moreover, the "Reformation" ideas spread most rapidly among the groups which carried the heritage of the Separate Baptists. Gates has written that the "Reformers followed the line of cleavage that originally existed between

1. Gates, op. cit., 80, 81.

Separates and Regulars."¹ From the earliest colonial period of the American Baptists, one can trace a strong element that was always attempting to restore the Early Apostolic Church. Roger Williams, the reputed founder of the American Baptists "Soon became disturbed as to his right to administer the ordinances of the church, conceiving that a true ministry must derive its authority from apostolic succession and, therefore, he could not assume the office of pastor....He finally came to the conclusion that the church was so corrupt that there could be no recovery out of that apostasy till Christ shall send forth new apostles to plant churches anew."² Shortly afterwards the "Six Point Baptists" arose which held for the "Laying on of Hands." During the revival of the Eighteenth century certain factions in Virginia sought to reproduce the apostolic customs of feet-washing, the Holy kiss, the anointing of the sick, love feasts, laying on of hands, and weekly communion. "They went so far as to appoint "Apostles"....The first apostle to be chosen was Samuel Harriss. Two others were afterwards appointed, but the system was not liked by the people, and after fruitless attempts to put it in force, it was abandoned."³

Thus it is evident, that when Campbell began pleading for a "Restoration" he was actually pleading for many things that had been dear to the hearts of the Separate Baptists, so quite naturally they flocked to his standard. Moreover, having no creed other than the New Testament, there was considerable freedom and diversity manifested by his various lieutenants and followers. It proved to be a difficult task for all to agree as to where the Bible "spoke" and where the Bible was "silent." Shortly after the

1. Gates, op. cit., p. 79

2. Sweet, The Story of Religions in America, p. 103

3. Gates, op. cit., pp. 76-77; also, Semple, Virginia Baptists, pp. 81-82

"Reformers broke away from the Baptist Association in Pittsburg, they began to restore the mutual exhortations of the Apostolic churches, and the Holy Kiss, which rent the church by debates and dissensions in the public meetings. At Cross Roads, Virginia, and elsewhere, the members thought it their privilege to "prophecy" in the meetings. In Kentucky the "Reformers" had trouble over the questions of the proper attitude of prayer, the hour for eating the Lord's Supper, the necessity of a loud amen to all public prayers, the number of deacons in a congregation, the holy kiss, etc.¹ In all of these extremes Campbell used tact and skill in interpreting for his followers what was "essential" and what was "non-essential" to "The Restoration of the Ancient Order of Things."

However, Campbell, and especially Scott, became convinced, shortly after hundreds began to declare themselves for the "Restoration," that the Millennium was soon to burst upon them as a natural result of united Christendom. Campbell discontinued the Christian Baptist in 1830 and began a new publication which he called "The Millennial Harbinger." The items most emphatically stressed in the prospectus were the "Ancient Gospel and a Restoration of the Ancient Order of Things," and the Millennium. To epitomize his objectives he headed the prospectus with the passage of scripture that has been the best known and most quoted by Mormons: "And I saw another angel fly in the midst of heaven, having the everlasting 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."²

1. Gates, op. cit., p. 75; also, George Q. Cannon, Life of Joseph Smith the Prophet, pp. 391-92.

2. Rev. 14:6-7

Scott never seemed to tire of talking on the subject of the Millennium,¹ yet at the same time he never neglected to stress the "First principles," namely, faith, repentance, baptism, remission of sins, and gift of the Holy Spirit. Sometimes he would stop children on their way from school, get them to raise their hands, and then count the five principles on their fingers, urging them to run home and repeat them to their parents and invite them to come out to the evening meeting.²

Rigdon seems also to have been greatly interested in the subject of the Millennium. One writer says, "Rigdon, who always caught and proclaimed the last word that fell from the lips of Scott or Campbell, seized these views, and with all the wildness of his extravagant nature, heralded them everywhere."³ Rigdon also became a champion for the restoration of Christian communism. Shortly before he joined the Mormons he had a "passage at arms with Mr. Campbell." This was "about two months previous to the fall of that star (Rigdon) from heaven....He introduced an argument to show that our pretension to follow the apostles in all their New Testament teachings, required a community of goods; that as they established this order in the model church at Jerusalem, we were bound to imitate their example."⁴ I feel that Rigdon was not so much influenced by the Rappites, Shakers, or the followers of Owen at New Harmony, as he was by the idea of literally "Restoring" primitive Christianity. In this particular point he believed that the Bible spoke, and Campbell thought it was silent so far as modern Christianity was concerned.

1. Hayden, op. cit., pp. 185, 184, 161, 171, 173

2. Baxter, Life of Scott, pp. 218-19

3. Hayden, op. cit., p. 186

4. Hayden, op. cit., p. 298

When Rigdon entered the Mormon church he did not need to discard his "Campbellite" theology. He could even retain the same phraseology and arguments that he had been accustomed to using. The Mormons were teaching faith, repentance, baptism by immersion for the remission of sins, and gift of the Holy Ghost.¹ The "Restoration of the Ancient Gospel" was the message of the first Mormon missionaries and has continued to be the cardinal teaching of all the thousands² of Mormon missionaries that have journeyed about the world since that time. By accepting Mormonism Rigdon got rid of the restraining hand of Alexander Campbell;³ he could move about with greater freedom of speech for the Mormons did not limit their "Restoration" ideas to the New Testament as had been the case with Campbell. Rigdon was always a great admirer of the Old Testament and the ancient prophecies.⁴ But the logical step which Rigdon took from "Campbellism"⁵ to Mormonism, properly comes under the heading of "Rigdon's conversion to and activity in the Mormon Church." This shall be treated in chapter four.

1. The Mormons insisted on the "laying on of hands for the gift of the Holy Ghost."

2. At present the Mormons have sent out approximately 60,000 missionaries.

3. Rigdon soon found that Joseph Smith would restrain him at certain points.

4. In referring to this period of Rigdon's life, Joseph Smith has written that "Not only did the writings of the New Testament occupy his attention, but occasionally those of the ancient prophets, particularly those prophecies which had reference to the present and to the future, were brought up to review and treated in a manner entirely new and deeply interesting." Journal of History, III, No. 1, 11

5. At this early period the "Back to the Bible Movement" was not known by any particular name. It was called by such titles as "The original gospel," "The primitive gospel," "the pentecostian gospel," "the Jerusalem gospel," and other titles as "Campbellism" and at times "Rigdonism." Baxter, Life of Scott, p. 290.

CHAPTER III

SIDNEY RIGDON AND THE ORIGIN OF THE BOOK OF MORMON

It would be well nigh impossible to write even a brief general outline of the life of Sidney Rigdon without digressing from the flowing narrative of events long enough to investigate the question: Did Rigdon have anything to do with the writing or the publication of the Book of Mormon --the foundation on which all claims of Mormonism to supernaturalism must rest? It is generally agreed by all Mormons that if Joseph Smith did not receive the gold plates, then his claims to visions, revelations, prophecies, etc., are false. The Book of Mormon has given the Latter Day Saints the name by which they have always been known to the world, and from the evidence of the past it appears to be a name which is inescapable for the followers of Joseph Smith.

If Rigdon had anything to do with either the writing or the publication of the Book of Mormon, then one must interpret the major activities of his life from at least a year or more before the Book of Mormon was published (1830) down to the end of his life (1873) in an entirely different manner than the writer has interpreted them. Up to this point the activities of Rigdon on the Western Reserve and elsewhere have been treated by the writer as though he knew nothing about Joseph Smith and his claims of divine communication. Moreover, the chapters which follow will continue with the same premise. Therefore, this long digression to discuss the various theories concerning the origin of the Book of Mormon is necessary; for in the main, the remaining chapters will be worthless if

the writer has erred on this point by not following the majority of writers who have directed their attention to this subject in the past. If Rigdon did assist in bringing forth the book he was one of the most cunning and deceitful liars of the nineteenth century. If he did not assist in any way to bring the Book of Mormon into existence then one must admit that the major part of all that has been written concerning Rigdon's association with the Mormon Church is worthless. Furthermore, if Rigdon did not deceive his friends in this particular, then at least the greater part of all the books from non-Mormon authors are of little or no value wherein they attempt to give an account of the origin of the Mormon Church, for most of them attempt to trace its origin either directly or indirectly to Sidney Rigdon, the Campbellite preacher.

Without attempting to prove just how the Book of Mormon came into existence, let us note the three theories which the reader is certain to find as he begins to examine the books on Mormonism that are to be found in the public library:

The Mormon claim has always been that Joseph Smith translated the record from some ancient gold plates which had been buried near Palmyra, New York, about the year A.D. 421. Moroni, the last recorder of the plates and the one who buried them, appeared to Joseph Smith as a resurrected personage and directed him to the place where the record lay. This occurred on September 22, 1823. On the same occasion he was shown the "Urim and Thummim," a sacred instrument which was to be used by Joseph Smith to translate the ancient record into the English language.¹ Four years later, to the very

1. The translation was also done with aid of a "Seer Stone," a chocolate colored stone which Joseph and Hyrum Smith found while digging a well. See Robert's New Witnesses for God, II 107-109.

day (September 22, 1827), Joseph Smith was given the plates and the instrument by the aid of which he was to translate the record. By the latter part of the year 1829 the record was translated and ready for the printer.¹ The gold plates were then shown to several witnesses who recorded their testimony that Joseph Smith was in possession of such plates.² After the translation was finished the sacred plates were returned to the angel Moroni. The following brief excerpts is from the pen of Joseph Smith giving his account of the origin of the Book of Mormon.

On the evening of the above-mentioned twenty-first of September (1823), after I had retired to my bed for the night, I betook myself to prayer and supplication to Almighty God for forgiveness of all my sins and follies, and also for a manifestation to me that I might know of my state and standing before Him; for I had full confidence in obtaining a divine manifestation, as I previously had one.³ While I was thus in the act of calling upon God, I discovered a light appearing in my room, which continued to increase until the room was lighter than at noonday, when immediately a personage appeared at my bedside, standing in the air, for his feet did not touch the floor. He had on a loose robe of most exquisite whiteness. It was a whiteness beyond anything earthly I had ever seen; nor do I believe that any earthly thing could be made to appear so exceedingly white and brilliant. His hands were naked, and his arms also, a little above the

1. The book was finished sometime between June and August 1829 and was published in March 1830. During the period of translation Joseph Smith had several different persons assist him as scribes from time to time. His wife, Emma, Oliver Cowdery, Martin Harris, and members of the Whitmer family served as amanuenses. Perhaps most of the translation was done within a period of six months. Ibid., pp. 104-122; also, Riley, The Founder of Mormonism, p. 388

2. Oliver Cowdery, David Whitmer, Martin Harris, Christian Whitmer, Jacob Whitmer, Peter Whitmer, Jr., John Whitmer, Hiram Page, Joseph Smith, Sr., Hyrum Smith, and Samuel H. Smith. The foregoing persons are known as the official witnesses to the Book of Mormon. Their names and written testimonies to the effect that Joseph Smith had gold plates, etc., are found in the Preface to every Book of Mormon. It is believed by Mormons that several other persons also saw the plates. See Roberts, op. cit., pp. 312-17.

3. Joseph Smith claimed to have had one vision prior to the one on September 21, 1823, when Moroni told him about the gold plates and showed them to him in vision. His first vision was in the spring of 1820 when he was fifteen years of age. This came in answer to his prayer in quest of which of all the churches was the true church; he claimed that on that occasion, after a struggle with the devil, he saw God the Father and his Son, Jesus Christ. On the occasion Jesus told him to join none of the churches "for their creeds are an abomination in My sight." (See L.D.S. Church History, I, 5-6)

wrist; so, also were his feet naked, as were his legs, a little above the ankles. His head and neck were bare. I could discover that he had no other clothing on but this robe, as it was open so that I could see into his bosom. Not only was his robe exceedingly white, but his whole person was glorious beyond description, and his countenance truly like lightning. The room was exceedingly light, but not so very bright as immediately around his person.

When I first looked upon him, I was afraid; but the fear soon left me. He called me by name, and said unto me that he was a messenger sent from the presence of God to me, and that his name was Moroni; that God had a work for me to do; and that my name should be had for good and evil among all nations, kindreds, and tongues, or that it should be both good and evil spoken of among all people. He said there was a book deposited, written upon gold plates, giving an account of the former inhabitants of this continent, and the source from whence they sprang. He also said that the fullness of the everlasting Gospel was contained in it, as delivered by the Savior to the ancient inhabitants; also, that 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 were what constituted "Seers" in ancient or former times; and that God had prepared them for the purpose of translating the book....He told me that when I got these plates of which he had spoken--for the time that they should be obtained was not yet fulfilled--I should not show them to any person; neither the breast plate with the Urim and Thummim; only to those to whom I should be commanded to show them; if I did I should be destroyed. While he was conversing with me about the plates, the vision was opened to my mind that I could see the place where the plates were deposited, and that so clearly and distinctly that I knew the place again when I visited it.¹

A theory which has been advanced from time to time from non-Mormon sources to account for the origin of the Book of Mormon is that Joseph Smith wrote it himself without the aid of divine revelation or the assistance of any human accomplice; and then foisted it upon the uncultured and miraculous-loving people of the American frontier of 1830.² This theory was first advanced in vigorous and rather abusive language by Alexander Campbell shortly after Rigdon and a large number of Campbell's followers joined

1. From L.D.S. Church History, I, 9-13. Joseph Smith claimed that he went to the hill and unearthed the gold plates the day following the first visitation of Moroni, but he was not permitted to take them home until his fourth annual visit to the place of their concealment, i.e., not until September 22, 1827.

2. The outstanding writers who have supported this view in one way or another are: Riley, in The Founder of Mormonism; Werner, in Brigham Young; Prince, in The American Journal of Psychology, XXVIII, 373-89; and Fairchild, in Western Reserve Historical Society, III, 187-200.

the Mormons. He saw in Mormonism a danger to the young church which he was just getting under way. In his official publication, The Millennial Harbinger for February 10, 1831, we find him devoting several thousand words to the subject of delusions in general and Mormonism in particular. Part of what he wrote at that time follows:

I have just examined their (The Mormons) Bible....Admitting the Bible now received to have come from God, it is impossible that the Book of Mormon came from the same Author....Smith, its real author, as ignorant and impudent a knave as ever wrote a book, betrays the cloven foot in basing his whole book upon a false fact, or a pretended fact, which makes God a liar....The God of Abraham or Joseph Smith must then be a liar!!... This ignorant and impudent liar, in the next place, makes the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, violate his covenants with Israel....One of the two (St. Paul or Joseph Smith) is a false prophet. Mormonites, take your choice!... I will sum up the whole of the internal evidences which I deem worthy of remark in the following details:--The book professes to be written at intervals and by different persons during the long period of 1020 years.¹ And yet for uniformity of style, there never was a book more evidently written by one set of finger, nor more certainly conceived in one cranium since the first book appeared in human language; then this same book. If I could swear to any man's voice, face, or person, assuming different names, I could swear that this book was written by one man. And as Joseph Smith is a very ignorant² man is called the author³ on the title page I cannot doubt for a single moment but that he is the sole author and proprietor of it....It (the Book of Mormon) has not one good sentence in it, save the profanation of those sentences quoted from the Oracles of the living God.⁴ I would as soon compare a bat to the American eagle, a mouse to a mammoth, or the deformities of a spectre to the beauty of Him whom John saw in Patmos, as to contrast it with a single chapter in all the writings of the Jewish or Christian prophets. It is as certainly Smith's fabrication as Satan is the father of lies, or darkness the offspring of night... "But Smith is the wonder of the world." So was the Apocalyptic beast! "An ignorant young man." That needs no proof. Gulliver's Travels is a heroic poem in comparison of this book of Smith. "But he cannot write a page." Neither could Mohamet, who gave forth the Alcoran. "Smith's an honest looking fellow." So was Simon Magus, the sorcerer. "But he was inspired." So was Judas, by Satan.⁵

1. The Book of Mormon actually claims to go back to the time of the "confusion of tongues" when the tower of Babel was built.

2. Every underscored word in this paper indicates an italicized word as it appears in the original quotation.

3. Joseph Smith never claimed authorship to the book; however, his name was used for "The Author and Proprietor" in the first edition simply as a means of following the recognized phraseology in securing a copyright.

4. Large sections of the Book of Mormon are direct reflections of the King James Version or direct quotations. It contains twenty-three complete chapters from Isaiah. Sperry, The Text of Isaiah in the Book of Mormon, p. 78; Linn, The Story of the Mormons, pp. 96-97, for others.

5. It is important to note in connection with this early declaration made by Campbell that he does not have the least suspicion that Rigdon had anything to do with the origin of the Book of Mormon; he knew Rigdon well--his style of writing and speaking and what he had been doing for the greater part of the decade between 1820-1830.

In a paper which was read before the Northern Ohio and Western Reserve Historical Society, March 23, 1886, the late President James H. Fairchild of Oberlin College does not place the writing of the Book of Mormon beyond the abilities of Joseph Smith. On that occasion he said, "It required only a very moderate degree of literary ability and invention to produce the book, and several of the original leaders of the fanaticism must have been adequate to the work."¹

In the more recent years a few psychologists have held to the theory that Joseph Smith wrote the book, but they do not agree with Campbell and the advocates of his theory in their assertion that the Mormon Prophet did it deliberately with the idea of deceiving his associates. Riley asserts that Joseph Smith was a victim of epilepsy or some disturbance closely akin to it. His mental condition varied at times from that of a person mildly suffering from some mental disorder to an extreme condition wherein he was completely deranged. Riley also suggests that Joseph Smith had, coupled with epilepsy, tremendous powers of hypnotism which he unwittingly practiced upon his associates to the degree that he persuaded them that they saw heavenly visions, handled gold plates, and heard celestial voices. As I have already suggested, the psychologists who have advanced the above theory are inclined to think that Joseph Smith was not always conscious of the fact when he created hypnotic hallucinations in the minds of his co-religionists; in fact, at times he was the victim of self-induced hypnosis.²

1. Western Reserve Historical Society, III, 187-200. In my opinion this is the best refutation of the Rigdon-Spaulding theory that has ever been given by a non-Mormon.

2. Riley, op. cit., p. 195--"His (J. Smith) self-induced states of hypnosis were synchronous with his youthful ill health;...his suggestive influence over others began soon after his quasi-epileptic seizures ceased." Prince, op. cit., p. 374--"He (J.S.) was the sole author...the edifice of whose imagination echoed to reminiscences which he was far from recognizing." Riley, op. cit., pp 69-70--"The visionary seizures (of J. Smith) were not consequent on dementia, nor were they feigned. There is a truer and at the

However interesting or convincing the above theories may appear, neither is the one which the reader on Mormonism will most frequently meet. The Rigdon-Spaulding¹ theory is the most widespread and most generally accepted theory outside Mormon circles. The champions of this theory, and their name is legion, maintain that the Book of Mormon is simply the combination of a historical romance which was written by a Reverend Solomon Spaulding, and the King James Version of the Bible. It is claimed that Sidney Rigdon either stole, copied, or read the romance and remembered its contents, and then passed it on to Joseph Smith who, working in collusion with Rigdon and others, foisted it upon the public as a divine revelation.²

The foundation of the Rigdon-Spaulding theory of the origin of the Book of Mormon was first presented to the public in 1834 in an anti-Mormon book called Mormonism Unveiled. This book was chiefly the work of a "Doctor Philastus Hurlbut; but its authorship was credited to N. D. Howe, an anti-Mormon editor of the Painesville Telegraph."³ Hurlbut was excommunicated from the Mormon Church in June 1833, for unchristian conduct with women, while on a mission to the east."⁴ Hurlbut became so enraged that he openly threatened the life of Joseph Smith. On April 9, 1834, he was "bound over, under two hundred dollar bonds, to keep the peace for six months," and pay the cost, which amounted to nearly three hundred dollars."

same time more charitable explanation,--it is, in a word, that Joseph Smith, Junior, was an epileptic." Riley, op. cit., p. 84, in speaking of a short transcript of a portion of the Book of Mormon made by J. Smith says: "Young Smith doubtless believed in the supernatural origin of his transcript;... it was written under more or less unconscious conditions." Ibid., p. 86-- "As is elsewhere shown, Joseph's condition, under the influence of his Urim and Thummim" was semi-hypnotic."

1. In some of the books on Mormonism the name is spelled "Spaulding."
2. Some writers maintain that Rigdon was merely the thief in the case, while others have suggested that the original manuscript was worked over by Rigdon before he gave it to J. Smith, thus explaining the great amount of religious matter in the Book of Mormon.
3. Pancoast, Mormons at Kirtland, p. 12
4. Werner, op. cit., p. 59, bluntly puts it, "for adultery and attempted murder of the Prophet Joseph Smith."

The court order also included "That he be of good behavior to all the citizens of the state of Ohio generally, and to the said Joseph Smith, Jr., in particular."¹

Very likely all books are written with some definite purpose in view. In the case of Mormonism Unveiled, one does not have to go beyond the lengthy title page to determine what its authors had in mind.² Too frequently the writers on Mormonism in their eagerness to use "source materials" have overlooked the evident purpose in view by Howe and Hurlbut when they wrote their book; and unwittingly these later writers have incorporated into their books a large amount of material that properly comes under the caption of "Early Anti-Mormon Propaganda."

It is recorded in Mormonism Unveiled that when the early Mormon missionaries came through Northern Ohio preaching their strange message, the people in the neighborhood of Conneaut recognized the Book of Mormon to be none other than the revised story of a late Reverend Solomon Spaulding³

1. L.D.S. Church History, I, 352-55

2. The full title is: Mormonism Unvailed: or A Faithful Account of That Singular Imposition and Delusion, From Its Rise to the Present Time. With Sketches of the Characters of Its Propagators, and a Full Detail of the Manner in Which the Famous GOLDEN BIBLE was Brought before the World, To Which Are Added, Inquiries into the Probability that the Historical Part of the Said Bible was Written by One Solomon Spaulding, More Than Twenty Years Ago, And by Him Intended to have Been Published as a Romance. By E. D. Howe, Painesville: Printer and Published by the Author, 1834.

3. Solomon Spaulding was born in Connecticut in 1761, graduated at Dartmouth College in 1785, was ordained to the ministry, and preached in New England a few years, taught an academy for a time in Cherry Valley, New York, or carried on mercantile business there and failed, and in 1809 removed to New Salem, now Conneaut, in Ohio, where in company with one Henry Lake he established an iron foundry. His business not prospering, he removed to Pittsburg, or its vicinity, in 1812, and a year or two later to Amity, Pennsylvania, where he died in 1816 at the age of fifty-five years. Spaulding had a literary tendency, and while living at Conneaut, he entertained himself with writing a story which purported to be an account of the original inhabitants of the country, their habits, customs and civilization, their migrations and their conflicts. From time to time, as his work went on, he would call in his neighbors and read to them portions of his manuscript, so that they became familiar with his undertaking. He talked with some of them about publishing his book, in the hope of retrieving his fortunes financially; and this appears to have been his purpose when he removed to Pittsburg. There is evidence that he conferred with a printer at Pittsburg, by the name of Patterson, in reference to the publication, but the book never appeared. Fairchild, Manuscript of Solomon Spaulding and the Book of Mormon, p. 188.

who had written a historical romance about twenty years before that time. In his quest for anti-Mormon propaganda Hurlbut had little difficulty in getting eight persons¹ to sign their names to separate testimonials that they recognized the Book of Mormon to be the work of some plagiarist who had taken it from the Spaulding romance. However, five of the eight testimonials were careful to state that only the "historical" part of the Book of Mormon was identical with the old story written by Spaulding.

Although the Spaulding romance, known to them as "The Manuscript Found" had never been printed, the people in the vicinity of Conneaut claimed to be well acquainted with its contents due to the fact that Spaulding had been in the habit of reading it to them from time to time.

Armed with the eight testimonials Hurlbut and his associate, Howe, felt certain that they had a strong case against the Book of Mormon. All that was now required to complete their case was to show how Joseph Smith came into possession of the unpublished romance of Solomon Spaulding, or, if possible, locate the manuscript and publish it. Howe followed one of the clues in the testimonials and went to Pittsburg, and interviewed Mr. Patterson, the printer, who was thought to have received the old romance from Spaulding, but for some reason or other had refused to publish it. Patterson could not recall anything pertaining to such a manuscript as the one described by Howe.²

At the same time Hurlbut went to Monson, Massachusetts and interviewed Mrs. Matilda Davison, the widow of the late Solomon Spaulding. From her it was learned that "Spaulding had a great variety of manuscripts,

1. John Spaulding (a brother of Solomon); Martha (his widow); Henry Lake; John M. Miller; Aaron Wright; Oliver Smith; Nahum Howard; and Artemas Cunningham.

2. Eight years later Patterson signed a statement that "a gentleman had put into the hands of his foreman a manuscript of a singular work, chiefly in the style of our English Bible. That he (Patterson) had read a few pages of it but did not print it because the author did not furnish the means." (Western Reserve Historical Society, III, 192.)

and one that was entitled the 'Manuscript Found,' but of its contents she had no distinct knowledge. While they lived in Pittsburg, she thought it was once taken to the printing office of Patterson and Lambdin; but whether it was ever brought back to the house again, she was quite uncertain: If it was, however, it was then with his other writings, in a trunk which she had left in Otsego County, New York."¹ Hurlbut received permission from Mrs. Davison to examine the trunk which was then at her cousin's home in Hartwick, New York, and if the much coveted manuscript was still there he was to take it on to Mr. Howe for publication. Hurlbut found a manuscript in the trunk and returned with it to Mr. Howe, but unfortunately for their purpose it did not supply the necessary material to couple it with the contents of the Book of Mormon. When Mormonism Unveiled was published, Howe gave a brief but inaccurate account of the manuscript which Hurlbut brought to his office; and suggests that Spaulding must have written two historical romances or revised the one that Hurlbut had received from Mrs. Davison and that the manuscript referred to in the eight testimonials must be lost.²

Even though their efforts were not rewarded with a manuscript that would parallel the Book of Mormon, the authors of Mormonism Unveiled felt that they had sufficient evidence in their eight testimonials to establish their case and they closed the subject saying that, "We have fully shown that the Book of Mormon is the joint production of Solomon Spaulding and some other designing knave, etc." Thus the Rigdon-Spaulding theory begins. Mormonism Unveiled does not show the connecting link necessary to prove that Rigdon or Smith was the "designing knave" who stole the dead preacher's romance and changed the title from "The Manuscript Found" to the Book of Mormon;" and replaced the mundane name of Solomon Spaulding with the names of a

1. Five years later she claims to be very familiar with the manuscript. Ibid., 192-93.

2. Mormonism Unveiled, p. 288; and Western Reserve Historical Society, III, 192-193.

whole group of angelic personages who had been prophetic recorders during their earthly sojourn. However, Mormonism Unveiled states that, "We may here stop to remark that an opinion has prevailed, to a considerable extent, that Rigdon has been the Iago, the prime mover, of the whole conspiracy. Of this, however, we have no positive proof; but many circumstances have carried a suspicious appearance; and further developments may establish the fact."¹ Furthermore, whenever referring to the conversion of Rigdon to the Mormon faith the book would have the reader believe that Rigdon's early objections advanced against Pratt and the other Mormon missionaries who first visited him, were just so much stage play to deceive the people into believing that he was actually converted from Campbellism to the new faith. Thus making it easier for him to lead them into the new church after he had joined. Moreover, Mormonism Unveiled with its eight witnesses to the similarity between Spaulding's old romance and the Book of Mormon declares that the genuine manuscript in question had been taken to a publisher in Pittsburg. Rigdon was the only Mormon of any importance at that early date who had ever lived in Pittsburg. The natural result was that writers who followed Howe and Hurlbut attempted to prove that Rigdon procured the manuscript from the Pittsburg printer and secretly communicated with Joseph Smith until the time of his conversion.

The foregoing theory that was advanced by Howe and Hurlbut relative to the origin of the Book of Mormon has proved to be a popular one. The possibility of Joseph Smith having connived with Rigdon in stealing an unpublished romance of a deceased minister² made an interesting story,

1. Mormonism Unveiled, p. 100

2. It is interesting to note that in a note written by Spaulding and discovered in 1835 he reveals clearly that he has no faith in the Christian Religion. On the other hand the Book of Mormon is a very religious book and abounds in claims of the divinity of Jesus. Western Reserve Historical Society, III, 195-96; Book of Mormon, Testimony of the Three Witnesses in the Preface and pp. 393-455 in late edition. X

required little effort beyond copying portions of Mormonism Unveiled, and at the same time it was certain to please the reading public, which in the main has generally been anti-Mormon in its sympathies. With a little additional material beyond that presented in Mormonism Unveiled, and in spite of the unexpected discovery in 1885¹ of the old Spaulding manuscript which Hurlbut got from the hair trunk in 1834, writers have continued from the latter day (1834) on to the present time (1930) to accept the Rigdon-Spaulding theory as an established fact.

Attention has already been called to the "enlargement of memory" which occurred with both the widow of Spaulding and the printer, Mr. Patterson, within a few years after Howe published Mormonism Unveiled.² A few more citations will show how this shadowy tradition became quite generally accepted by non-Mormon writers as definite history; although the widow of Spaulding knew very little concerning the manuscript in 1834, by 1839 she permitted her name to be attached to an article that was published in the Boston Recorder in which she describes the manuscript very fully. The article also stated that when the Book of Mormon was first read in the old neighborhood of Conneaut, John Spaulding, a brother of her deceased husband, and one of the eight to write a testimonial for Hurlbut,

1. "The manuscript, lost sight of since the date of Howe's book, came to light at Honolulu, Hawaiian Islands, a year ago last August (in 1855) in the possession of Mr. L.L.Rice, formerly State printer at Columbus, Ohio. I (Pres. Jas. H. Fairchild) had asked Mr. Rice, who was an anti-slavery editor in Ohio many years ago, to examine his old pamphlets and papers and see what contributions he could make to the anti-slavery literature of the Oberlin College library. After a few days he brought out an old manuscript with the following certificate on a blank page: '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.' The three men named are of the eight witnesses brought forward by Howe...The manuscript proves its own antiquity. It is soiled and worn and discolored with age, etc." From Western Reserve Historical Society, III, 193, by Pres. James H. Fairchild of Oberlin College.

2. See page 40, note 2 and page 41, note 1.

Recognized perfectly the work of his brother. He was amazed and afflicted that it should have been perverted to so wicked a purpose. His grief found vent in a flood of tears, and he rose on the spot, and expressed in the meeting his sorrow and regret that the writing of his sainted brother¹ should be used for a purpose so vile and shocking. The excitement in New Salem (Conneaut) became so great that the inhabitants had a meeting and delegated Dr. Philastus Hurlbut, one of their number to repair to this place, and to obtain from me the original manuscript of Mr. Spaulding, for the purpose of comparing it with the Mormon Bible, to satisfy their own minds, and to prevent their friends from embracing an error so delusive.²

In the same article it is stated that Sidney Rigdon had lived in Pittsburg at the time Spaulding was attempting to get Patterson to publish his romance and that Rigdon got the contents of the story from the printer's office.

It would be a comparatively easy task to cite a score or more books that show evidence of either eagerness or carelessness in using the Rigdon-Spaulding theory either in toto, or with slight variations,³ as set forth by Hurlbut and Howe and the purported statement of Mrs. Davison to the Boston Recorder.

As late as 1884 authors were still collecting "testimonials."

In that year James Jefferies testified on January 20, that

Forty years ago I was in business in St. Louis....I knew Sidney Rigdon. He told me several times that there was in the office with which he was connected, in Ohio, a manuscript of the Reverend Spaulding, tracing the origin of the Indians from the lost tribes of Israel. The manuscript was in the office several years. He was familiar with it. Spaulding wanted it published, but had not the means to pay for the printing. He (Rigdon) said Joe (Joseph) Smith used to look over the manuscript and read it on Sundays. Rigdon said Smith took the manuscript and said, "I'll print it," and went off to Palmyra, New York.⁴

1. The "Reverend" S. Spaulding perhaps died a non-Christian. See note 2, page 42.

2. Quoted in Gleanings by the Way, p. 252, it became so well established that Mrs. Davison did not write this article that the writer of this book admits the fact even though quoting the article! It was written by a minister who had interviewed Mrs. Davison hoping to get some information to combat the activities of Mormon Missionaries in his parish. See Fairchild, op. cit., p. 193, and Times and Seasons, I, 45.

3. See Linn, Story of the Mormons, pp. 74-77 for his fanciful account of "The Everlasting Gospel" and S. Rigdon's use of it.

4. Mormon Portraits, by Dr. W. Wyl, 1886, p. 241. Spaulding wrote his story in 1811-1812. Rigdon never saw Joseph Smith until the latter part of 1830; none of the anti-Mormon writers claimed the manuscript was left in an Ohio printing office; Rigdon was not a printer in Ohio, neither did he ever live in St. Louis!

One who is unacquainted with the extremes to which anti-Mormon authors have gone at times might marvel that the foregoing obviously worthless "testimonial" could find its way into sober print. However, the excerpt from The Latter Day Saints, A Study of the Mormons, by Kauffman and Kauffman, (1912, p. 30) which follows is as far from the evidence at hand as the foregoing "testimonial" by Jefferies, and to the reader who is unacquainted with Mormon history it would be more likely to convince him of the Rigdon-Spauldung theory. It states that:

The book (The Manuscript Found) was painstakingly completed in 1812, fifteen years before Smith's discovery, and a copy then given for publication to a printer or bookseller in Pittsburg, Pennsylvania, a man named Patterson. Here the story created no favorable impression, but was allowed to gather dust for several years. The author died without seeing his romance in print, and Patterson, on an occasion, lent the manuscript to a compositor in his employ, Sidney Rigdon, who was also a preacher of chameleon faith. Then, in 1825, Patterson died. Rigdon next came into view as the right hand man of Joseph Smith at the start of the Mormon Church. In 1839 the widow of Spaulding published a statement in a Boston, Massachusetts, newspaper, which led to a public meeting. At this meeting the manuscripts of The Manuscript Found and the Book of Mormon were compared, and it was established beyond question that the similarity of the two could not be disregarded. The names of the different characters were exactly the same, and whole pages were word for word alike. Moreover, since Spaulding had not been an educated man, traces of illiteracy were observable in his work, and these errors were repeated in the Book of Mormon. The only rebuttal offered at the time was that issued by Rigdon, whose reply was not worthy of the name of argument, and whose coarseness did small good to the Mormon cause.

The above paragraph with all its interesting details does not reassure the reader by giving him a single corroborative reference. In short, not a single sentence of the entire paragraph is correct.¹ We will stop with this quotation from Kauffman and Kauffman in our demonstration of how a shadowy tradition, created in 1834 and reinforced by eight testimonials that were valid only in the case that some neighbors of Solomon Spaulding could remem-

1. The manuscript, not a "copy" of it was supposedly offered to the printers. Rigdon never was employed by Patterson. Patterson was still alive in 1842. (See Western Reserve Historical Society, III, 192.) The Mormon Church had been organized and started on its way before "Rigdon became the right hand man." Mrs. Spaulding did not publish the article in question in the Boston paper (see page 44, note 2). Mrs. Spaulding never saw the manuscript after Hurlbut took it to Howe; she never had an opportunity of seeing a Book of Mormon manuscript in her entire life. The names in the two manuscripts are not alike in a single instance, (see page 49). Spaulding was an educated man--a graduate of Dartmouth (see page 39, note 3, etc.).

ber his romance which he had read them over twenty years before, became accepted as sober history as time went on in spite of the abundant evidence to the contrary. And without attempting to lengthen the list to all of the more important items of evidence which make the Rigdon-Spaulding theory untenable, I submit the following:

1) No one has ever presented a single sentence of direct evidence that Rigdon ever saw Joseph Smith until after the publication of the Book of Mormon.¹

2) There is considerable evidence that Sidney Rigdon did not live in Pittsburg before 1822, and that at no time in his entire life did he have anything to do with the Patterson and Lambdin printing company. Up to this time he had been a farmer, a tanner and a lay preacher.²

3) In view of the fact that the missionaries who converted Rigdon did not stop at Kirtland after he had been baptized, but went on their way "to convert the Lamanites (Indians)," travelling over one thousand miles westward beyond Kirtland and enduring hardships³ and disappointments even greater than was the common lot of all Christian missionaries who attempted to take their message to the savages west of the Mississippi--all this makes it preposterous to believe that when they left Joseph Smith to begin their Missionary work they had Sidney Rigdon in mind and knew that he would join their cause, having been secretly one of its chief founders. Their experiences at Kirtland have all the ear marks of genuineness and not that of a cheap bit of stage play to deceive Rigdon's congregation. In this connection one must also remember that Rigdon was successful with the people around Kirtland and the

1. The late "testimonials" of Rigdon's absence from home, etc., quoted by Patterson and Dickenson have long since been exploded. Likewise the "mysterious stranger" myth. See pro statements in New Light on Mormonism, p. 252.

2. Journal of History, III, No. 1, pp. 6-13.

3. See Autobiography of Parley P. Pratt, chapters 6-8.

Campbellite movement appeared to have a bright future before it while at the same time the Mormon group had but a handful of people and its future success did not appear very promising.¹

4) During the seven years interval in which Joseph Smith told his neighbors and family about the Book of Mormon (1823-1830), Sidney Rigdon was a successful lay preacher in Pittsburg, and later, on the Western Reserve. During the greater part of this time he was several hundred miles away from the home of Joseph Smith. The fact that he was a man of moderate means, busily engaged in the work of the ministry and the more commonplace activities of supporting his family; and at the same time attempting to advance the cause headed by Alexander Campbell, presents a strong case against the theory that he was secretly conniving with the young man, Joseph Smith, who was a farmer several hundred miles away.²

5) There are good reasons for believing that Spaulding wrote only one manuscript and that it is the one which Hurlbut received from Mrs. Matilda Davison and which later came to light in Honolulu in 1885.

(A) Five of the eight testimonials which Hurlbut got from the old neighbors of Spaulding were careful to state that the Book of Mormon was like the old romance which had been read to them "except for its religious part."³

(B) It is a bit doubtful that Spaulding would have written two separate manuscripts on the same subject. The eight witnesses for Hurlbut testified that the manuscript which was found was one that Spaulding had

1. See statement of Campbell in Millennial Harbinger, 1835, p. 44, "Perhaps we were too sanguine when we thought that the fable (Mormonism) was so barefaced that it could not stand upon its legs, etc."

2. Journal of History, II, No. 1, pp. 9-15; also, Reorganized L.D.S. Church History, I, 146-55.

3. The Book of Mormon deals with what might properly be called "religious" material on every page. Many followers of the Rigdon-Spaulding theory claimed that Rigdon, who was a preacher, mixed the Biblical quotations and theme found in the Book with the old romance written by Spaulding and then gave it to Joseph Smith.

written. However, it so obviously did not agree with the details of the Book of Mormon that they were forced to admit that it was not the manuscript that they had already testified had been read to them twenty years before.¹

(C) Very likely the eight witnesses who gave their testimonials to Hurlbut could not remember the old romance which Spaulding had read to them except in its general outline, and in this respect the Book of Mormon and the Spaulding story which came to light in Honolulu agree. Both claim (ground?) to have been taken out of the group. The manuscript of Spaulding reads:

Near the west bank of the Conneaught river there are the remains of an ancient fort. As I was walking and forming various conjectures respecting the character, situation and numbers of those people who far exceed the present Indians in works of art and ingenuity,² I happened to tread on a flat stone. This was at a small distance from the fort, and it lay on the top of a small mound of earth, exactly horizoned. The face of it had a singular appearance. I discovered a number of characters, which appeared to me to be letters, but so much effaced by the ravages of time, that I could not read the inscription. With the assistance of a lever I raised the stone; but you may easily conjecture my astonishment when I discovered that its ends and sides rested on stones, and that it was designed as a cover to an artificial cave....Within this cavity I found an earthen box, with a cover which shut it perfectly tight. The box was two feet in length, one and a half in breadth, and one and three inches in diameter. My mind filled with awful sensations which crowded fast upon me, would hardly permit my hands to remove this venerable deposit; but curiosity soon gained the ascendancy; the box was taken and raised to open. When I had removed the cover I found that it contained twenty-eight of the parchment, and that whenappeared to be manuscripts written in elegant hand, with Roman letters, and in the Latin language. They were written on a variety of subjects, but the roll which principally attracted my attention contained a history of the author's life and that part of America which extends along the Great Lakes and the waters of the Mississippi.³

One of the earliest written accounts by the Mormon Church regarding

1. It is important to note in this connection that they had already given their "testimonials" before the manuscript was obtained from Mrs. Davison by Hurlbut.

2. The manuscript is full of misspelled words, etc., which has caused some to question that Spaulding, who was a graduate of Dartmouth, was the actual author.

3. Western Reserve Historical Society, III, 194-95. I have quoted from this source rather than from some reprint of the entire manuscript, because it is more available. However, the Reorganized L.D.S. and the L.D.S. Church have had the manuscript printed and through their missionary system many copies have been distributed. As the quotation indicates, portions of the manuscript were torn, thus omitting a few words.

the discovery of the Book of Mormon plates follows and very likely, in the main, it was the story told by the first missionaries who began preaching Mormonism in the neighborhood of Conneaut and brought to the minds of Spaulding's friends the story he once read to them:

I left the field, and went to the place where the messenger had told me the plates were deposited;....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 rounding in the middle on the upper side, and thinner towards 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, I 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.¹

The witnesses to the Book of Mormon said that they handled the plates; "And we also saw the engravings thereon, all of which was the appearance of ancient workmanship."² In both cases the records were translated from a foreign language into the English language.

(D) It was very likely the above general similarities between the old romance and the Book of Mormon, that the neighbors remembered. In this connection it is also to be noted that both are dealing with people who were pre-Columbian and both contain names that are peculiar to each book-- and are not found elsewhere in literature; and, finally, they both claim to be translations from older writings which were dug out of the ground. But at this point the similarities between the two books cease. The Book of Mormon is a religious book, every page containing religious and Scriptural ideas.⁴ Spaulding, although he was nominally a minister, did not believe in the Christian religion. His story is nothing more than a clumsy bit of fiction that no sane printer would have taken the financial responsibility of placing before the public. The Spaulding romance is only one-sixth the size of the Book of Mormon; and "There is not a name or an incident common

1. L.D.S. Church History, I, 15-16

2. Found in Preface of each Book of Mormon.

3. (4) See Western Reserve Historical Society, III, 194.

to the two. It is not written in the solemn Scripture style...The names of persons are entirely original, quite as remarkable as those in the Book of Mormon, but never the same--such as Bombal, Kadocam, Lobaska, Hamboon, Ulipoon, Lamesa, etc."¹

6) As one might expect, Mormon writers have stoutly denied the Rigdon-Spaulding theory from the very beginning. Moreover, many of the most careful non-Mormon writers agree with them on this point. Riley in his The Founder of Mormonism,² after giving considerable attention to the Rigdon-Spaulding theory says:

In fine, Rigdon is a doubtful connecting link; the presumption of collusion is only negative....Judging from the characteristics of the book, the proof of authenticity is decisive. In form³ it has no resemblance to the Honolulu manuscript; in matter it needs neither Rigdon's personality nor Spaulding's romance to account for itself.

Then after going into details contrasting Rigdon's style of speaking and writing with the style of the Book of Mormon, he concludes: "To sum up: These marks of the book are not the marks of the man Rigdon."

(b) Bays has written that "The Spaulding story is a failure. Do not attempt to rely upon it--it will let you down....The entire theory connecting Sidney Rigdon and the Spaulding romance with Joseph Smith in originating the Book of Mormon must be abandoned. We have something better."⁴

(c) Werner has written that,

There are many flaws in this (Rigdon-Spaulding) theory of the origin of the Book of Mormon. There is absolutely no evidence worthy of consideration that Sidney Rigdon and Joseph Smith ever met before more than a year after the publication of the Book of Mormon;⁵ It has also been impossible to establish definitely, in spite of desperate efforts, that Sidney Rigdon ever worked for the printing firm of Patterson and Lambdin... The Spaulding story was an attempt on the part of the first ardent anti-Mormons to discredit the divine origin of the Book of Mormon....The whole

1. Ibid., p. 194. These statements from President Fairchild.

2. Published in 1902. See pp. 387-94.

3. I have already shown that they do agree in their general features.

4. The Doctrines and Dogmas of Mormonism, Examined and Refuted, 1897, pp. 24-25.

5. The Book of Mormon was published March, 1830; Rigdon met J. Smith Dec. 1830.

Spaulding story is an instance of the feverish efforts of anti-Mormons to prove that Joseph Smith was incapable of writing the Book of Mormon without the aid of God, and they refused to admit for a moment that he did so with the aid of God. It is my conviction that Joseph Smith wrote the Book of Mormon without the aid of God, and that the book itself shows evidence of being a product of Smith's environment.¹

(d) Prince has written that

Prolonged analysis and comparison (by himself) made it incredible that Spaulding had any connection with the book, doubtful that Rigdon was implicated, certain that Joseph Smith's hand is perceptible in every part, and probable that he was the sole author, the edifice of whose imagination echoed to reminiscences which he was far from recognizing.² If there were no knowledge of Smith it would yet be most probable that the author lived in western New York....Smith did, but Spaulding and Rigdon did not.

Several other non-Mormon authors³ could be quoted to show that the Rigdon-Spaulding theory does not stand the test of careful investigation. Perhaps of the entire group of non-Mormon writers to reject this theory President Fairchild of Oberlin College was the most effective.⁴

7) Another important item of evidence which has been generally overlooked by both Mormon and non-Mormon writers is the fact that Alexander Campbell knew Sidney Rigdon well; he knew his style of preaching and writing; he knew what Rigdon had been doing during the decade of 1820-1830. In connection with these facts one must remember that Campbell was one of the first men to read the Book of Mormon and attempt to give a written analysis of its contents. At that time he said that, "If I could swear to any man's voice, face, or person, assuming a different name, I could swear that this book (Book of Mormon) was written by one man....I cannot doubt for a single moment but that he (J. Smith) is the sole author and proprietor of it."⁵

1. Life of Brigham Young, 1925, pp. 58-60.

2. American Journal of Psychology, XXVIII, (1917), pp. 373-89.

3. Bancroft, History of Utah, p. 189; Stenhouse, The Rocky Mountain Saints. These writers are all non-Mormons, and in some cases decidedly (Anti) in sympathy.

4. I refer to his paper read before the Northern Ohio and Western Reserve Historical Society, March 23, 1886, after he came into possession of the old Spaulding romance. It is quite evident that I have quoted liberally from his paper throughout this chapter.

5. Millennial Harbinger, 1831, p. 95.

Campbell would have been the most likely man to have discovered any contribution that might have been offered by Sidney Rigdon to the Book of Mormon; and, moreover, his anger was so aroused because of Rigdon's apostasy from "Campbellism" and his having taken any disciples with him into the Mormon fold, he would not have hesitated to use anything that would discredit the Mormon claims to divinity and at the same time humiliate his former lieutenant, Sidney Rigdon.

8) When the purported letter of Mrs. Spaulding-Davison appeared in the Boston Recorder, in 1839, definitely stating that Rigdon had lived in Pittsburg and had been connected with the printing company of Patterson and Lambdin, Rigdon immediately wrote a flat denial which he continued to affirm until his death even though he was excommunicated from the Mormon Church about twenty-nine years before his death, and non-Mormons on several occasions attempted to persuade him to admit that the Book of Mormon was founded on the Spaulding manuscript. The following sentences are taken from his letter to the Boston paper after Mrs. Spaulding's letter appeared:

It is only necessary to say in relation to the whole story about Spaulding's writings being the hands of Mr. Patterson, who was at Pittsburg, and who is said to have kept a printing office, etc., etc., is the most base of lies, without even the shadow of truth....If I were to say that I ever heard of the Rev. Solomon Spaulding and his hopeful wife until D. P. Hurlbut wrote his lie about me, I should be a liar like unto themselves.¹

Rigdon's son, John, visited Salt Lake City in 1865 on his way to California. While there he visited some of the Mormons who had been his boyhood friends in Nauvoo, which awakened his interest in Mormonism. Years later he joined the Mormon Church and has written that his conversion was due to a conversation which he had with his father (S. Rigdon) after he returned East. After going over the orthodox explanation of the origin of the Book of Mormon the conversation is reported to have proceeded as follows:

(John speaking)

- 1. Complete letter is found in the Appendix.

Is this (i.e., Mormon story of the Book of Mormon) true? If so, all right; if not, you owe it to me (John) and to our family to tell it. You (Sidney) are an old man and you will soon pass away, and I wish to know if Joseph Smith, in your intimacy with him for fourteen years had not said something to you that led you to believe he obtained that book in some other way than what he had told you. Give me (John) all you know about it, that I may know the truth. My father (Sidney), after I had finished saying what I have repeated above, looked at me a moment, raised his hand above his head and slowly said, with tears glistening in his eyes: "My son, I can swear before high heaven that what I have told you about the origin of that book is true. Your mother and sister, Mrs. Athalia Robinson, were present when that book was handed to me in Mentor, Ohio, and all I ever knew about the origin of that book was what Parley P. Pratt, Oliver Cowdery, Joseph Smith and the witnesses who claimed that they saw the plates have told me, and in all of my intimacy with Joseph Smith he never told me but one story, and that was that he found it engraved upon gold plates in a hill near Palmyra, New York, and that an angel had appeared to him and directed him where to find it; and I have never, to you or to any one else, told but the one story, and that I now repeat to you."¹

From the evidence that has been available since 1885, one can readily see that the Rigdon-Spaulding theory might have taken the following steps in its development from a shadowy tradition to its wide acceptance as sober history: After "Doctor" Philastus Hurlbut was excommunicated from the Mormon Church, because of his immorality, and later forced to pay about three hundred dollars in court fees, etc., for threatening to murder Joseph Smith, he occupied his time for a while giving anti-Mormon lectures.² While in Conneaut, a district where he had once resided, he heard rumor that the story of the Book of Mormon reminded some of the people of an old romance

1. Cited by Roberts in A Comprehensive History of the Church, I, 234-35. P. P. Pratt writes that he first introduced Rigdon to Mormonism: "About the 15th of October, 1830, I (P. P. Pratt) took my journey, in company with Elder O. Cowdery and Peter Whitmer, to Ohio. We called on Elder S. Rigdon, and then, for the first time his eyes beheld the Book of Mormon. I myself had the happiness to present it to him in person (!) He was much surprised, and it was with much persuasion and argument that he was prevailed on to read it. Now I (P.P.Pratt) testify, that the forgers of the Spaulding lie (concerning S. Rigdon and others) are of the same description as those who forged the lie against the disciples of old, accusing them of stealing the body of Jesus. And those who love this lie are no better; and except they repent they will have their part with drunkards, whoremongers, sorcerers, thieves, murderers, etc., for being guilty of loving and making a lie." Kidder, Mormonism and Mormons, pp. 68-69.

2. See Werner's Brigham Young, p. 59.

that the late Solomon Spaulding had read to them twenty years before. They were reminded of the Spaulding story because the Mormon Elders, in their public discourses, told how Joseph Smith got the records ~~from~~ a stone box; and that it was a history of the early inhabitants of America, and that it had been translated into the English language from an ancient one. The introduction to the old Spaulding romance, in a broad general way, claimed to be a similar record; and it also saw the light of modern times in the above fashion, i.e., purported to have been found in a stone box, contained information of a group of people who came to America in pre-Columbian times and was translated by Spaulding into the English language. Upon hearing these rumors, Hurlbut, in collaboration with H. D. Howe, the anti-Mormon editor of the Painesville Telegraph determined to prove that Spaulding was actually the author of the Book of Mormon. Hurlbut began to question the neighbors of Spaulding who had heard him read his manuscript twenty years before; and the very questions he asked would suggest the answers for which he hoped. With little difficulty he obtained the written testimony of eight witnesses that the Book of Mormon was, in the main, identical with the old Spaulding romance. Some testified that they could well remember such Book of Mormon names as "Nephi", "Lehi", and "Moroni", etc., as having been in Spaulding's romance.

In order to fully clinch their "proof," Howe and Hurlbut then attempted to locate the old unpublished manuscript. The widow of Spaulding (now Mrs. Davison) then living in Monson, Massachusetts, directed them to the writings of her former husband. The old romance was found and taken to Howe's printing office in Painesville, Ohio. Upon examination they discovered that the manuscript showed no resemblance to the Book of Mormon other than in its most general characteristics. To have published it would have been damaging to their plans.

They were then compelled to either abandon their theory and leave unpublished their book which was almost ready for the press, or shift the evidence. They did the latter; they briefly, but somewhat inaccurately, described the manuscript which they had received from Mr. Davison and admitted that it did not agree with the Book of Mormon. They then advanced the theory that Spaulding rewrote his manuscript and that it was the re-written one which had been read to his neighbors, and unfortunately the second draft was lost. In their book, Mormonism Unveiled, they published the eight testimonials and hinted that Sidney Rigdon had known of Mormonism before the publication of the Book of Mormon.

Mormonism Unveiled became quite popular. Its long list of testimonials against the Smith family in general and Joseph Smith in particular, and the eight testimonials that Spaulding was the real author of the Book of Mormon, has made it the classic of Anti-Mormon literature. Five years after Hurlbut and Howe had published their book, a Rev. D. R. Austin of Monson, Massachusetts,¹ needed some arguments against the Mormon missionaries who were successfully proselyting in his vicinity. He interview^{ed} Mrs. Davison and then wrote a long anti-Mormon article which was published in the Boston Recorder under her name. This article was quickly utilized by anti-Mormon writers who followed, because it definitely stated that Spaulding had taken his romance to Patterson and Lambdin, Pittsburg printers, and that Sidney Rigdon had stolen the story from that place. Rigdon immediately denied the statements and it was later proved that Mrs. Spaulding was not the author of the article, but the theory was too convenient and, at times, too attractive to be abandoned.

1. Fairchild connects Austin with the deception; Pratt (a Mormon) says that it was written by "Priest Storrs (meaning a protestant minister) who had lost his deacon and several members of his church."--See Times and Seasons, I, 48-46. In Gleaning by the Way (non Mormon) we find both Storrs and Austin mentioned, p. 76.

In a remarkably short time after the publication of Mormonism Unveiled it is observable that both Mrs. Davison and the printer, Mr. Patterson, have an enlargement of memory which continued with their descendants and relatives.¹ Mrs. Ellen E. Dickinson, a grandniece of Mrs. Solomon Spaulding, in her New Light on Mormonism found it easy to put imaginings in the place of facts in her statements in reference to Rigdon as follows:

At an early age he was a printer by trade, and is known to have been in Conneaut, Ohio, at the time Spaulding read his Manuscript Found to his neighbors....and it is easy to believe the report that he followed or preceded Spaulding to Pittsburg, knowing all his plans, in order to obtain his manuscript, or copy it, while it was in Patterson's printing house--an easy thing to do, as the fact of the manuscript being left carelessly in the office for months, is not questionable.²

From the publication of Mormonism Unveiled down to 1885 when the old Spaulding manuscript was unexpectedly discovered in Honolulu, the advocates of the Rigdon-Spaulding theory did little more than rehash the old arguments set forth by Howe and Hurlbut so far as evidence is concerned. But after 1885 there has been an inclination on the part of non-Mormon writers to abandon the old theory due to the fact that the discovered manuscript fits the early description of the old romance, and at the same time, it does not agree with the contents of the Book of Mormon.

Writers like Kauffman and Kauffman in their book, The Latter Day Saints, reveal the fact that they are unacquainted with the facts in the case and have done little more than read some second or third handed rehash of the old story as told in Mormonism Unveiled, and the letter of 1839 in the Boston Recorder that was falsely written under the

1. See Who Wrote the Book of Mormon? by R. Patterson, a son of the early printer; and New Light on Mormonism, by Ellen E. Dickenson, a grandniece of Mrs. Spaulding.

2. Page 47 of book quoted; and Western Reserve Historical Society, III, 199.

name of Mrs. Davison. Moreover, in the last mentioned book, one finds that the authors did not limit themselves to the general tradition but permitted their imaginations the freest rein possible. Before returning to the more interesting subject of Rigdon's activities in the Mormon Church after his conversion let us close this chapter with a short reiteration from the anti-Mormon Bays: "The Spaulding story is a failure. Do not attempt to rely upon it--it will let you down....The entire theory connecting Sidney Rigdon and the Spaulding romance with Joseph Smith in originating the Book of Mormon must be abandoned. We have something better."

CHAPTER IV

SIDNEY RIGDON--A MORMON LEADER

(KIRTLAND PERIOD 1831-1838)

In the fall of 1830, a few months after Rigdon had clashed with Campbell at Austintown over the subject of including early Christian Communism in the "Restored" faith, four young Mormon preachers called at his home.¹ Among the group was Parley Parker Pratt, an erstwhile lay preacher of "Campbellism," who had been converted by Rigdon a few months past. Doubtless Rigdon was surprised to find his friend preaching a new gospel, but whatever his feelings, he did not hesitate to offer him hospitality. When Pratt and his associates handed Rigdon a copy of the Book of Mormon, which had been printed but a few months, he expressed "considerable doubts" to the supernatural claims that were made for the book, and when the young enthusiasts attempted to argue the subject with him he said, "No, young gentlemen, you must not argue with me on this subject; but I will read the book, and see what claim it has upon my faith, and will endeavor to ascertain whether it be a revelation from God or not."²

Without waiting to hear his final decision on the subject, the four missionaries began to go from house to house, teaching that the Apostolic Church was restored through the mediation of angels. A few days later, with Rigdon's permission, they held a public meeting in his church which was well attended. Considerable interest was shown in their theme and at the close of the service their pastor, Sidney Rigdon, arose and

1. P.P.Pratt, Ziba Peterson, Oliver Cowdery, Peter Whitmer.
2. Journal of History, III, No. 1, 13.

Stated to the congregation that the information they had that evening obtained was of an extraordinary character, and certainly demanded their serious attention: And as the apostle advised his brethren to 'prove all things, and hold fast to that which is good,' so he exhorted 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.¹

At Kirtland, which was about two miles from Mentor, the Mormon Elders were successful in converting seventeen members of small communistic group.² A few others within Rigdon's preaching district were baptized. Frequently the missionaries would call at Rigdon's house and discuss their message with him and they usually found him busily engaged in reading the Book of Mormon "and praying to the Lord for direction." At the end of two weeks he had finished the book and had arrived at the conclusion that Mormonism was the apostolic church divinely restored to the earth. He told his wife what his convictions were, and asked her if she would follow him in accepting the new religion. Not wishing her to overlook the economic consequences³ of a change in religion, he is reported to have said, "My dear, you have followed me once into poverty, are you again willing to do the same?" Her answer was, "I have counted the cost and I am perfectly satisfied to follow you; it is my desire to do the will of God, come life or come death."⁴

Rigdon then publicly announced his conversion to Mormonism stating that "he was fully convinced of the truth of the work, by a revelation from Jesus Christ, which was made known to him in a remarkable manner, so that he could exclaim 'flesh and blood have not revealed

1. Ibid.

2. Rigdon was very interested in this small group of people which attempted to have "all things in common." When Joseph Smith arrived in Kirtland he persuaded them to give up their system for the "United Order" which he instituted.

3. He seems to have suffered financial reverses after leaving the Baptist Church in Pittsburg. At this time his friends were in the act of building him a new house, etc. (See Ibid., p. 12).

4. Ibid., p. 15.

it unto me, but my Father which is in heaven'."¹ Rigdon's conversion caused a great deal of excitement in that section of the Western Reserve. A hundred years have passed since he became a Mormon; the Mormon Church has enjoyed a healthy growth from that time until the present, and its thousands of missionaries during this long period of time have brought many converts into their church who have far surpassed Rigdon in wealth, training, native ability or strength of character. But in the writer's opinion, Sidney Rigdon ranks among the most important of all Mormon converts.

With all his instability and lack of technical training, he stood for "the last word" in education and culture, in the minds of hundreds living in that part of America. The Mormon missionary could now boast that a successful preacher had accepted the new religion. Tullidge, the Mormon historian, has written that "Undoubtedly the splendor of Sidney's career gave to the Mormon Church a substantial dignity."² Rigdon gave Mormonism an intellectual respectability of which it could not boast up to that time. Moreover, he gave it the best and most effective advertising that it ever has received in that section of the United States. The paramount item in determining the success of a new religious sect is converts. Wealth, culture, organization, etc., are of little use unless people continue to accept the message. People want to be associated with a "going concern" whether it is a church or a school or some kind of business. The most attractive part of a missionary's message, particularly if he represents a new church, is the evidence he can produce that others are eagerly accepting the teaching. Churches clarify and elaborate their doctrines, establish their creed, and stabilize their machinery of control after they have converted many people.

1. Ibid., p. 14

2. Tullidge, Life of Joseph the Prophet, p. 108.

When Rigdon announced his conversion the Mormon Church was but eight months old. It is very doubtful that there were over one hundred converts up to that date. Not a single book¹ or pamphlet had been published; only a very meagre beginning had been made relative to church organization, and much of its theology was yet to be defined. Her missionaries had a simple message and teaching that could be easily understood and readily accepted by people who had been taught by "Campbellite" teachers, that all of Christendom had drifted from the Apostolic Church and that a "Restoration of the Ancient Order of Things" was necessary. The Mormon missionary agreed that such condition had prevailed; but they insisted that angels had visited the earth and had restored the Apostolic Church, that neither Campbell nor any man could restore it of himself; God had to do it--and he had done it a few months past. It was this argument, coupled with the divine claims made for the Book of Mormon, which converted Rigdon and which caused him to be immersed on November 14, 1830, by Oliver Cowdery. The latter claimed to have received his ordination along with Joseph Smith under the hands of no less a person than John the Baptist.

The Mormon teaching was readily understood and startlingly convincing in Northern Ohio when Rigdon was converted. Pratt has written that

The interest and excitement now became general in Kirtland, and in all the region round about. The people thronged us night and day, insomuch that we had no time for rest and retirement. Meetings were convened in different neighborhoods, and multitudes came together soliciting our attendance; while thousands flocked about us daily; some to be taught, some for curiosity, some to obey the gospel, and some to dispute or resist it. In two or three weeks from our arrival in the neighborhood with the news, we had baptized one hundred and twenty-seven souls, and

1. The Book of Mormon had been published; its theology and polity are very simple. About 34 revelations had been received by the prophet; he had just begun his "Inspired Translation" of the Bible.

this number soon increased to a thousand.¹ The disciples were filled with joy and gladness; while rage and lying was abundantly manifested by gain-sayers.²

Upon Rigdon's conversion the missionaries baptized him and his wife and ordained him and several other new converts to the office of "Elder." Then Pratt, and his companions and Dr. Frederick Williams, one of their new converts, went on their way to the Indian territory lying west of the Mississippi, which had been their objective when they left Joseph Smith in New York State. They were looking for the place mentioned in the Book of Mormon where the "New Jerusalem" should be built before the coming of the Lord. Joseph Smith had received a revelation designating its location as somewhere on the "Border of the Lamanites."³ Their windfall of converts at Kirtland had been incidental to their original mission.⁴

Shortly after his conversion Rigdon left for Manchester, New York, to meet Joseph Smith, the founder of Mormonism. He took Edward Partridge, a successful young hatter of Painesville, along with him.⁵

1. There was not a thousand until the next summer.

2. Autobiography of P.P.Pratt, p. 50.

3. Smith, (Joseph, Junior), Book of Doctrine and Covenants of the Church of the Latter-day Saints, Section XXVIII; they are to preach to the Lamanites, i.e., Indians; the prophet is to find the exact location for the city later on.

4. These missionaries remained at Kirtland until after Rigdon had departed for the Prophet's home. The Prophet sent John Whitmer to look after the new converts and then Pratt and his companions went on their way to Missouri. Pratt returned about March 1, 1831, and gave his report. In June, 1831, the prophet went to Missouri and shows them where the city of Zion should be built.

5. Lucy Smith, the Prophet's mother, relates their appearance thus: "In December....Joseph appointed a meeting at our house. While he was preaching, Sidney Rigdon and Edward Partridge came in, and seated themselves in the congregation. When Joseph had finished his discourse, he gave all who had any remarks to make the privilege of speaking. Upon this, Mr. Partridge arose, and stated that he had been to Manchester with the view of obtaining further information respecting the doctrine which he preached; but not finding us he had made some inquiry of our neighbors concerning our characters, which they stated had been unimpeachable, until Joseph deceived us relative to the Book of Mormon. He also said that he had walked over our farm and observed the good order and industry which it exhibited...And, having heard that our veracity was not questioned upon any other point than that of our religion, he believed our testimony, and was ready to be baptized, 'if', said he, 'brother Joseph will baptize me.'...Joseph replied... 'You had better rest today, and be baptized tomorrow.'" Lucy Smith, Joseph the Prophet, p. 170.

Joseph Smith has left no record describing his elation upon hearing of the fruitful labors of his first missionaries, and the arrival of the famous preacher, Sidney Rigdon, but one thing appears certain: Welcome as the "great" preacher of thirty-seven might have been to the young prophet of twenty-five, the latter did not feel over-awed in the great man's presence. Neither did he ever play a subservient part to Rigdon, or hesitate to claim a position of "Prophet, Seer, Revelator, and Translator" to the church. In fact, the following day, after Rigdon's arrival, the Prophet had two revelations.¹ The first one revealed "the will of the Lord" concerning Rigdon, and the second one was directed to Edward Partridge. The revelation for Rigdon is significant in that it shows the position he shall take in the church. A generous portion of it follows:

1) Listen to the voice of the Lord your God, even Alpha and Omega, the beginning and the end, whose course is one eternal round, the same today as yesterday, and forever.

2) I am Jesus Christ, the Son of God, who was crucified for the sins of the world, even as many as will believe on my name, that they may become the sons of God, even one in me as I am in the Father and the Father is one in me, that we may be one.

3) Behold, verily, verily, I say unto my servant Sidney, I have looked upon thee and thy works. I have heard thy prayers, and prepared thee for a great work.

4) Thou art blessed, for thou shalt do great things. Behold thou wast sent forth, even as John, to prepare the way before me, and before Elijah which should come, and thou knowest it not.

5) Thou didst baptize by water unto repentance, but they received not the Holy Ghost;

6) But now I give unto thee a new commandment, that thou shalt baptize by water, and they shall receive the Holy Ghost by the laying on of the hands, even as the apostles of old.

7) And it shall come to pass that there shall be a great work in the land, even among the Gentiles, for their folly and their abominations shall be made manifest in the eyes of all people;

1. Doctrine and Covenants, Sections 35 and 36.

8) For I am God, and mine arm is not shortened; and I will show miracles, signs, and wonders, unto all those who believe on my name.

9) And whoso shall ask it in my name in faith, they shall cast out devils; they shall heal the sick; they shall cause the blind to receive their sight; and the deaf to hear, and the dumb to speak, and the lame to walk;

10) And the time speedily cometh that great things are to be shown forth unto the children of men;...

15) ... the time of my coming,... is nigh at hand...

17) And I have sent forth the fullness of my gospel by the hand of my servant Joseph; and in weakness have I blessed him,

18) And I have given unto him the keys of the mystery of those things which have been sealed...from the foundation of the world...

19) Wherefore, watch over him that his faith fail not...

20) 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...

22) And now I say unto you, tarry with him, and he shall journey with you; forsake him not, and surely these things shall be fulfilled.

23) And inasmuch as ye do not write, behold, it shall be given unto him to prophesy; And thou shalt preach my gospel and call on the holy prophets to prove his words, as they shall be given him...

27) Fear not, little flock, the kingdom is yours until I come. Behold I come quickly. Even so Amen.¹

Both Rigdon and Partridge were favorably impressed with the Prophet and his revelations. Rigdon immediately became his Scribe, and some months later Partridge became the first bishop in the church.²

Because of Rigdon's age, wider experience and better education, writers have frequently been misled in their attempts to place each man in his proper relationship with the other, and with the church in general.

1. Doctrine & Covenants, Sec. 35, Verses 19-23 have particular importance to this study.

2. Pancoast, Mormons at Kirtland, p. 22, says, "January 19, 1830, another advertisement offers 'my valuable hatter stand for sale' and states that he wished to quit the business. By September 28, 1830, six weeks before the four missionaries appeared he (i.e., Partridge) had sold it. It is possible and may be probable that he was merely a pilgrim seeking the truth." (A Master's thesis located in the Western Reserve University.)

Rigdon is frequently called the "brains" of Mormonism by anti-Mormon writers. Some writers give him the credit, or blame, for the authorship of the Book of Mormon, or at least parts of it, the church form of organization, and most of its peculiar doctrines. That he influenced Joseph Smith there can be no reason for doubt,¹ because they were together most intimately for over a decade. But in attempting to discover wherein Rigdon contributed anything to Mormonism, one should remember that the following items were established before he met Joseph Smith: The idea that,

- 1) God is a personal being--"A glorified man."
- 2) Jesus is a separate and distinct being from God, and He also is a glorified man.
- 3) A resurrected person has a tangible body, and can appear before a human being and talk, labor, etc.
- 4) That Satan and evil spirits are realities and are enemies of the work of God, i.e., the progress of the Mormon Church.
- 5) The American Indians are a degenerate branch of the ancient Israelites.
- 6) The Book of Mormon is a divine record of the forefathers of the American Indians.
- 7) America is a "promised land" and a "holy city" shall be built upon this continent. A temple shall be built in the holy city and Christ will soon come to his temple.
- 8) The Mormon Church is the only true church in the world, and its Elders are the only divinely commissioned priesthood on the earth.
- 9) Joseph Smith was a prophet, seer, revelator, and translator, and the only person who was supposed to receive revelation for the guidance of the church during his lifetime.
- 10) The doctrine of faith, repentance, baptism by immersion for the remission of sins, and the laying-on-of-hands for the gift of the Holy Ghost.

1. See page #77 for David Whitmer's statement regarding Rigdon's influence on the prophet. The following is from I.W.W.Riley's The Founder of Mormonism, p. 92. "It is true that he (J.S.) had little use for books, but he utilized men. The learning of his contemporaries was poor but he made it his own. His absorptive acts were many and various. He was directed by revelation to 'study and learn, and become acquainted with all good books, and with languages, tongues, and people.' So the 'Visions and writings of Moses' came out with the appearance on the scene of Sidney Rigdon the peripatetic prodigy of the Western Reserve."

- 11) The church should have Apostles, Elders, priests, teachers, and deacons. The duties of these officers had been defined.
- 12) The prayers for blessing the Eucharist were already written.
- 13) The missionary system had begun and the preaching "without purse or scrip" had been introduced.
- 14) The gifts of the Spirit, i.e., healings, visions, prophecy, etc.¹

From the prophet's journal and other available data it appears that Rigdon did not hesitate to obey the revelation which had instructed him to "watch over the Prophet, that his faith fail not... write for him... tarry with him... forsake him not... preach my gospel and call on the holy prophets to prove his (J.S.) words, as they shall be given him." He was kept very busy during his visit in New York State which lasted until the latter part of January. Most of the time during these two months, he and the prophet were busily engaged in producing an "Inspired translation of the Bible."² We also learn from less reliable sources that he gave a

1. I do not present the above as an exhaustive list of Mormon theology and church polity that was in operation before Rigdon came on the scene, but merely to indicate some of the "fundamentals" of Mormonism which preceded him.

2. A careful reading of the various sources convinces me that this was begun before Rigdon appeared, but little headway had been made. This work lasted over a number of years. The Prophet's journal of Feb. 2, 1833, says, "I completed the translation and review of the New Testament, and sealed it up no more to be opened till it arrived in Zion." In July 2, 1833, he writes: "We this day finished the translation of the Scriptures, for which we return our gratitude to our heavenly father. There is no evidence that either Joseph Smith or Sidney Rigdon knew any language other than the English up to this time. As they went through the Bible the Prophet would detect the errors through inspiration and his scribe, Rigdon, would record the necessary changes. This "Inspired Version" was never published during his lifetime. Years after his death the "Reorganized" branch of the Mormon Church had the Prophet's inspired version printed and it is still highly prized by them. The Utah Mormons have never accepted the "Inspired Version" in its printed form, stating that it was the Prophet's intentions to carefully re-check his notes, etc., before sending the manuscript to the printer; but he was murdered before he had the opportunity to make a final correction. For further details see Robert's Comprehensive History of the Church, I, 247-48. No changes were made in Daniel, Obediah, Micah, Zephaniah, Habukkuk, Malachi. The principal changes in the Old Testament are made in Genesis, Exodus, and Isaiah. 12,652 were added to Mark. Some of the changes were in spelling, some in a change in numbers reported; capitalization of words, etc. The "Inspired Version" differs from matters of minor importance to those of considerable importance with similar sections in the "King James Version."

public sermon on Mormonism in the town hall of Palmyra--just about three miles from the Smith farm. On that occasion, it is said, he picked up the Bible in one hand and the Book of Mormon in the other, and bringing them together with force "pronounced them one in inspiration and importance."

Besides his preaching and translating¹ he carefully investigated the rumors afloat that the Smith family, and especially Joseph, were bad characters. He investigated the cause of the Prophet's arrest on the charge of disturbing the peace, and from two different magistrates he received a written statement clearing his friend from any illegal acts. He is honored by receiving a revelation or two with the Prophet, and when John Whitmer, one of the "eight witnesses to the Book of Mormon" was to be sent to Ohio to look after the new converts he sent a long letter to his friend in that vicinity who had embraced the new faith. Among other things the letter contained the following:

I send you this letter by John Whitmer, Receive him, for he is a brother greatly beloved, and an Apostle of this Church. With him we send all the revelations we have received; for the Lord has declared unto us that you pray unto Him that Joseph Smith and myself go speedily unto you... The Lord has made known unto us some of his great things which he has laid up for them that love Him, among which the fact that you are living on the land of promise and that there (at Kirtland) is the place of gathering... Therefore, be it known to you, brethren, that you are dwelling on your eternal interitance; for which cease not to give ceaseless glory, praise and thanksgiving to the God of Heaven.²

Rigdon soon follows the letter to Kirtland.³ In the latter part of January, he and Partridge, Joseph Smith and his wife, Emma, leave New

1. Years later Rigdon referred to these early months with the Prophet in the following manner: "I recollect in the year 1830 I met the whole Church of Christ in a little old log house about 20 feet square, near Waterloo, N.Y., and we began to talk about the Kingdom of God as if we have the world at our command. We talked with great confidence, and talked big things. Although we were not many people, we had big feelings. We knew 14 years ago that the Church would become as large as it is today. We were as big then as we ever shall be. We began to talk like men in authority and power. We looked upon the men of the earth as grasshopper..." (L.D.S. Church History, VI, 288.)

2. Kennedy, Early Days of Mormonism, p. 84

3. Kennedy and others have Rigdon precede.

York State and for the next seven years, Kirtland, Ohio, becomes the main centre of Rigdon's activities. The position that Joseph Smith should hold in the church was well demonstrated within five minutes after his arrival in Kirtland.

The sleigh drove through the streets of Kirtland and drove up in front of the store of Gilbert and Whitney. One of the men, a young and stalwart personage, alighted, and springing up the steps walked into the store and to where the junior partner was standing. "Newel E. Whitney! Thou art the man!" he exclaimed, extending his hand cordially, as if to an old familiar acquaintance. "You have the advantage of me," replied the merchant, as he mechanically took the proffered hand, "I could not call you by name as you have me." "I am Joseph the Prophet," said the stranger smiling. "You've prayed me here, now what do you want of me?"¹

Rigdon might have been looked upon as the "Great orator of the Mahoning Association," but he was never mistaken for a prophet up to this time in his life. From now on his glory was eclipsed by the young and audacious Yankee who could look men in the eye and say, "I am Joseph, the Prophet." Within a remarkably short time people began to journey from all parts of America and Canada, and eventually in greater numbers from England, to the Mormon headquarters to see the "Lord's Anointed." But no one in the history of the world ever went from England to America to hear a Yankee preacher, though he might have "the tongue of men and of Angels"---and charity. Eloquent preachers of one style or another can be found in most every township or parish. But men who believe they are prophets--and dare to apply the title to themselves in the close circle of sympathetic friends, and when occasions demand, "from the house tops," are rare indeed.

During Rigdon's absence some of the new converts in the vicinity of Kirtland went to emotional extremes which border on the ridiculous and the absurd. In the main these "spiritual phenomena"² were similar to the

1. History of the Church, I, 146.

2. See Mormonism Unveiled for the anti-Mormon description of what occurred and the partial acknowledgment by the Mormons in Roberts Comprehensive History of the Church, I, 243.

extremes that were reported during the Separate Baptists revival in Virginia, the Kentucky revival, and the "Campbellite" demonstrations in Pittsburg, Kentucky, and elsewhere. Some of the Mormon leaders were hesitant in declaring themselves for or against the strange antics of their brethren, but when Joseph, the Prophet, appeared it soon ceased. He declared it to be the manifestation of the "Evil One." Stone, Edward, or Whitefield, or any of the revivalist preachers would not have found a kindred spirit in the Mormon Prophet. What the revivalists might have interpreted as the manifestation of the Holy Spirit, the Prophet would have denounced as the manifestation of the Devil.

There is no clear evidence regarding Rigdon's attitude toward these strange manifestations. Whatever it might have been he was not given much time to brood over the question. His neighbors who had not accepted the new faith began calling at his house to ask troublesome questions. Perhaps the anti-Mormon, Mr. Howe, can be relied on for the following:

Two friends went from Mentor to see him--required of him a reason for his present hope, and for his belief in the Book of Mormon. He declined: saying he was weary, having just come off his journey, and had lost much sleep, and the like. After a number of words had passed... one of the friends from Mentor said he thought there was no more evidence to confirm the Book of Mormon, than the Koran of Mohamet. At this Mr. Rigdon seemed very angry, rose up and said, "Sir, you have insulted me in my own house--I command silence--if people come to see us and cannot treat us with civility, they may walk out of the door as soon as they please." The person then made some apology. Mr. Rigdon said he had borne everything: He had been insulted and trampled upon, by old and young and he would bear it no longer... Two days later... (we) found him in conversation with a Methodist elder... Mr. Rigdon, with great show of good nature commenced a long detail of his researches after the character of Joseph Smith.¹ He

1. Much has been written against the early life and background of the family (Smith). When Hurlbut started his anti-Mormon propaganda he went to the old home of the Smith's and got a large number of people to sign adverse affidavits. Riley says of them, "No reliance is to be placed in the multiplied affidavits of jealous neighbors, who swore on oath that there was much intoxication among the Smiths: People in those days had the affidavit habit." (p. 66). Kennedy, in speaking of some of the affidavits says: (p. 17) "Some portion of this may have been dictated by envy, malice, or that form of righteousness which controls men at times when their

declared that even his enemies had nothing to say against his character; he had brought a transcript from the dockets of two magistrates, where Smith had been tried as a disturber of the peace, which testified that he was honorable acquitted... He then spoke of the supernatural gifts which he said Smith was endowed with.¹

Mrs. Rigdon was also questioned on her new faith. She did not argue the point from scripture or by pointing to the supernatural claims of the Prophet. She simply said on such occasions: "He (Rigdon) seemed to be altered in demeanor to such an extent that the religion must be of divine origin, else it could not have produced so wonderful an effect."²

Mrs. Rigdon's test for revealed religion may have had weight with many Kirtland wives even though it is not quoted by theologians or philosophers.

Rigdon had more aggressive opponents to answer than curious neighbors. Alexander Campbell, his old captain in the "Reform" movement was aroused to action. He wrote a long article on "Delusions," in which he denounced the Book of Mormon and Joseph Smith.³ Moreover, he reserved

neighbors have been more successful than themselves, but the allegations had a foundation in fact." The Mormons denounce all the statements against the morality, industry, and general character of the Smith family and they have documentary evidence for their claims. The following can be said in favor of his immediate family. There were no illiterates; both the father and mother served as country school teachers at one time or another. They had suffered several financial reverses before coming to Manchester, but through their industry they could boast of having done the following a few years: Cleared 60 acres of timber land and replanted the land with twelve to fifteen hundred sugar trees, and to gather the sap and make sugar molasses from that number of trees was no lazy job. He worked hard to clear our place and the neighbors were little jealous... We never knew we were bad then, but at once people began to circulate falsehoods and stories in a wonderful way." This agrees with the condition found when Rigdon first visited the Prophet. He was satisfied with the report of reliable witnesses. The anti-Mormon propaganda had not been written at that time. For the Mormon defense see Roberts, op. cit., I, 1-58. Affidavits to the good character of the family can be found in Saints' Herald, March 5, 1881, p. 165. Also, in The Branden and Kelley Debate, pp. 100-104. The chief anti-Mormon source from which later writers all quote is E. D. Howe's Mormonism Unveiled.

1. From Howe's Mormonism Unveiled.
2. From Kennedy's Early Days of Mormonism, p. 81
3. Alexander Campbell never forgave the Mormons for running off with Rigdon and many other members of his flock. Besides the scathing denunciations which have already been quoted in this paper one finds here and there in the Millennial Harbinger articles against the Mormons. In one case we find him publishing a rabid description of a fanatical group

part of his wrath for Sidney Rigdon which he poured into the Millennial Harbinger. He stated,

It was with mingled emotions of regret and surprise that we have learned that Sidney Rigdon has renounced the ancient gospel... and fallen into the snare of the Devil in joining the Mormonites... His instability, I was induced to ascribe to a peculiar mental and corporeal malady, to which he has been subject for some years... Perhaps this profession of hypocrisy may be attributed to the same cause. This is the only hope I have in his case... While Sidney and Cowdery, and Magnus Apollo of Smith, were in conclave in this matter, Sidney yielded to the suggestion to pray. Whereupon one of his fits of swooning and sighing came from him, he saw an angel and was converted... He that expects visits from angels will find them as abundant as he who in the age of Witchcraft found a witch in every unseemly old woman. (M.H., 1831, p. 100)

The old gentleman, Thomas Campbell, wrote an open letter to Rigdon challenging him to debate the subject. Unlike his son, he did not forget that he and Rigdon had been friends and co-workers in a religious movement, and that Rigdon had done much towards insuring the success of the movement which was now headed by his son. The salutation of this long letter is respectful, the body contains a clear definition of the premise on which the debate is to be discussed, and the closing is in these words:

Best respects to Mrs. Rigdon, and sincerest wish for the happiness of your family. I remain, with grateful remembrances of the past, and best wishes for the future, your sincere friend and humble servant, Thomas Campbell.¹

It is stated that "Rigdon read until he came to a passage wherein Mormonism was characterized as 'infernal,' when he arose in anger, and threw the letter into the fire." Rigdon has not left us any statement of his reaction toward this challenge. Usually he was not the man to pass a challenge of any kind without some action, but whatever the truth may be, it seems

that had no connection with the Mormon Church and he placed it under the heading of "Mormonism." He printed such a false report of the actual happenings when Joseph Smith was murdered that one of his own members protested. Later he published the protest but immediately under the article he printed another article which placed Mormonism in a ridiculous light--accusing them of cheap trickery in connection with their claims for divine healings. See Millennial Harbinger for verification of the above assertions: 1831, p. 523; pp. 356-57; pp. 93-100; 1833, p. 44; 1840, p. 42; It has been a general rule of "Disciple" historians to ignore the fact that Mormonism did run off with some of their followers. Richardson, Memoirs of Alexander Campbell, says that the Mormons were not very successful among them, but were among the Methodists, p. 348.

1. See Howe's Mormonism Unveiled, pp. 116-23.

that he did not debate the question publicly with his old friend. The action taken by the Campbells is indicative to the character and disposition of the two men, and at the same time reveals from their point of view that, "Grievous wolves had entered in among them, not sparing the flock, and men speaking perverse things were drawing away Disciples after them."

The year 1831 proved to be full of work that was varied and at times exciting to Sidney Rigdon. The prophet continued to have revelations from time to time, a few of which were received jointly with Rigdon. Hundreds continued to join the Mormons and in June, the fourth conference of the church was held at Kirtland.¹ This conference was a notable event in the existence of the infant church. About two thousand people were present. During the conference the Missionaries who had been traveling about the country gave the reports of their success, "the man of sin was revealed... he (the Devil) bound Harvey Whitlock and John Murdock so that they could not speak, and others were affected; but the Lord showed to Joseph, the seer, the design of the thing; he commanded the devil in the name of Christ, and he departed, to our joy and comfort;" the office of High Priest was revealed² and was conferred upon several.

A revelation was received appointing by name twenty-eight elders to travel through the western country in pairs, preaching the gospel by the way, baptizing and confirming by the water's side those who would receive the truth. These elders were to meet in conference in western Missouri "upon the land," said the Lord, "which I will consecrate unto my people, which are a remnant of Jacob, and those who are heirs according to the covenant." Joseph Smith, Jr., and Sidney Rigdon were to be among those who were to go upon this mission, and if faithful the Lord promised to reveal to them the place of the Saints' inheritance in Missouri. "I will hasten the city in its time," said the Lord, "and will crown the faithful with

1. Church conferences: (1) June 9, 1830; (2) September 26, 1830; (3) January 2, 1831; (4) June 3, 1831--first three at Fayette in Seneca County, New York.

2. See Whitmer's comment on the institution of the High Priest's office.

joy."¹

Before Rigdon departed on this long journey with Joseph Smith another revelation affecting him was received (March, 1831). He and Pratt² accompanied by Copley were to

Go and preach my gospel which we have received, even as ye have received it, unto the Shakers... for whose forbiddeth to marry is not ordained of God, for marriage is ordained of God unto man... And whose forbiddeth to abstain from meats, that man should not eat the same, is not ordained of God... And again, verily I say unto you, that the Son of Man cometh not in the form of a woman, neither of a man traveling on earth.³

The Shakers were well content with the "revelations" which they were receiving from time to time.⁴ They would not hear, much less receive the Mormon gospel.

On June 19, 1831, Sidney Rigdon, Joseph Smith, and several others "in accordance with a revelation previously given," started from Kirtland for Missouri, going by wagon, canal boats and stages to Cincinnati; and from

1. From Roberts, op. cit., I, 250. In turn he is quoting from the revelations that were current to that period. It is important to note at this point that shortly after the Prophet came to Kirtland he persuaded the little communistic colony near there to give up "their family plan" of communism for what later became known as the "United Order." After the Prophet and Rigdon went to Missouri and consecrated the land for the gathering of the saints, etc., the "United Order" was advanced more vigorously. Rigdon was always interested in some plan or other to restore the condition of having "all things in common" mentioned in the book of Acts. He was advocating this before he came into the Mormon Church and after he left. The "United Order" is very complex and a long study in itself. The best thing that has ever been written on it is by Joseph A. Geddes, The United Order Among the Mormons, (A published Ph. D. thesis). He states that the Mormon plan is "neither joint stock nor communistic. It appears rather unwarranted to infer that Joseph Smith borrowed it from Sidney Rigdon's experiment." p. 21.

2. It is to be remembered that before the Prophet arrived in Kirtland, Pratt and his companions went on their journey to preach to the "Lamanites." During their entire trip they visited the Catteraugus Indians, near Buffalo, N. Y.; the Wyandots of Ohio; and the Delawares, west of Missouri. They investigated the conditions in western Missouri, and then Pratt was sent back to Ohio to report to the Prophet. This was early in the spring of 1831. That accounts for his presence mentioned above. In a very short time after his report, the Prophet and Rigdon with others make their first trip to Missouri.

3. Doctrine and Covenants, Section 49.

4. Many of the old Shaker revelations are now preserved in manuscript at the Western Reserve Historical Society.

that place by steamer to St. Louis. At this point Rigdon and his wife continued by water while most of the group, including Joseph Smith, traveled overland on foot to Independence, Jackson County, Missouri. Rigdon arrived at Independence about the middle of July. "Independence in 1831, though the County seat... was but a small frontier town. It had a courthouse built of brick, two or three merchant stores, and fifteen or twenty dwelling houses, mostly of logs hewed on both sides."¹

In August Rigdon was appointed by revelation to write a description of the land of Zion for the use of the church members living in the East who were planning on moving to Independence where the central gathering place was now designated to be.² The foundation of the first house was begun in solemn fashion. Twelve men, each representing one of the twelve tribes of Israel, carried the first log. Sidney Rigdon then consecrated the land to the gathering of the saints.

He asked the assembled saints³ "do you receive this land for the land of your inheritance with thankful hearts from the Lord?"⁴ Answer from all, "we do." "Do you pledge yourselves to keep the law of God on this land which you never have kept in your own lands?" "We do," etc.

After prayer, he rose and said: "I pronounce this land consecrated and dedicated unto the Lord for a possession and inheritance for saints, and for all the faithful servants of the Lord to the remotest ages of time in the name of Jesus Christ, having authority from him. Amen."⁵

1. Description given in Roberts, op. cit., I, 260

2. Ezra Booth who also made this trip, and apostatized immediately afterwards, wrote to his friend Partridge about Rigdon's description of the land (Letter #VII), "Sidney has written a description of Zion. But it differs from that which you wrote... Knowing him to be constitutionally inclined to exaggerate... you cautioned him against it. 'What I write will be written by the most infallible inspiration of the holy spirit,' he said." A revelation was given shortly afterwards which said, "I, the Lord, am not pleased with my servant Sidney Rigdon; he exalted himself in his heart... his writing is not acceptable unto the Lord, and he shall make another, and if the Lord receive it not, behold he standeth no longer in the office which I have appointed him. D.C. 63:55-56.

3. Just a "handfull" present on this occasion.

4. They do not expect it without cost.

5. Roberts, op. cit., I, 255

The day following the dedication of the land, the Prophet designated the spot where the great temple should be built which shall be the place where "The Lord whom ye seek shall come suddenly, etc.," in the last days.¹ Shortly after this event most of the Elders, including Rigdon and the Prophet, start on their homeward journey in sixteen canoes. At the close of the third day's journey on the river, "N.W. Phelps beheld in open vision the 'destroyer' in the most horrible power ride upon the face of the water." "Others," continues the Prophet in his narrative, "heard the noise but saw not the vision." A revelation was received by the Prophet at this time from the Lord stating,

Behold there are many dangers upon the waters, and more especially hereafter, for I, the Lord, have decreed in mine anger, many destructions upon the waters, yea and especially these waters... Behold, I, the Lord, in the beginning blessed the waters; wherefore the days will come that no flesh shall be safe upon the waters.²

Up to this point in their homeward journey disagreements had occurred among them. They now became reconciled to each other. Some went overland preaching from town to town "without purse or scrip" depending on the generosity of the people for food and lodging. Rigdon and the Prophet went overland by carriage, arriving at Kirtland, August 27, 1831.

From the time Rigdon visited the Prophet in his home in Fayette until they were imprisoned in Missouri in 1839, they were together almost constantly. Kirtland was the headquarters of the church until Joseph Smith and Sidney Rigdon fled from the place in January 1838. But from the first trip of the Prophet to Missouri down until the date of his murder in 1844, there were several centers of activity. In many respects the "headquarters"

1. The Mormons have never built a temple upon this spot. It is the most coveted piece of ground on earth to sincere Mormons. At present a small group of Mormons called the Hedrikites possess it.

2. Doctrines and Covenants, Section 61: 14-15. The Mormon historian, Roberts, cites the recent and past destruction along the Missouri River and other western waters as proof of the truthfulness of this prophecy. Roberts, op. cit., I, 275-6.

was really where the Prophet happened to be, and Rigdon was usually close at hand. After the land of Zion had been dedicated and the temple site established by the Prophet, Mormons continued to migrate to Missouri. In 1837 the first missionaries were sent to England where their labors were attended with phenomenal success.¹ Therefore, one must remember that Rigdon's interests were wide and varied during the Kirtland period. Mormon history from 1832 on to the present time becomes complex, and due to its variety of interests and activities the historian is faced with a problem of selecting and segregating that which he thinks is most important, for it would be impossible to write everything.

The writer of any phase of Mormon history has to be continually on his guard or he will find himself lost in a mass of supernatural claims which may not throw much light on the subject in question, yet be of interest in itself. On the other hand one has to remember that the Prophet and his followers decided every important move of the church through "divine revelation." Like the early Pharisees, the Mormons interpreted everything religiously. When they wrote history it was sacred history; their songs were religious songs; where they should build their homes was a sacred question; their public buildings of importance were buildings for worship. Temples and holy sites were dedicated, but so were printing presses. Prayers were the formal way of opening church services, likewise dances and other socials.² It was the belief that Joseph Smith was constantly receiving communication from God which inspired the people to sacrifice their means to build temples, reclaim swamps, cultivate prairie lands, start to England on a mission without a penny--even sacrifice their lives when necessary to carry out their Prophet's injunctions which were prefaced with "Thus saith the Lord."

1. See Life of Wilford Woodruff; Life of N. C. Kimball; Autobiography of P. P. Pratt, and page 116 of this thesis.

2. How early the Mormons opened their socials with prayer I cannot say, but it dates from an early period and is still their custom.

How far Rigdon believed the divine claims of Joseph Smith one cannot say. At first he seems to have had unqualified faith in the Prophet's revelations. He showed obedience to the revelations that directed him or re-proved any of his actions. But as time went on he and the Prophet gradually drifted apart. He does not obey the divine command as at first. However, at all periods we find him holding steadfast to his first stand on the divinity of the Book of Mormon--the chief cause of his conversion. That he claimed to have shared in these revelations of the Prophet there is no question, but others, also, had the same privilege. That he influenced the Prophet there can be little doubt, but the evidence appears that his influence was chiefly in the form of elaborating and enlarging rather than in starting the church theology off into any new channel. The intricate and complex church organization of the Mormons has been gradually developed from the day the church was organized (1830) up to the present time. What influence the preacher Rigdon had in the doctrine and polity of the church during this time can never be fully determined. His suggestions and advice were decided upon by the Prophet, worked over in his own mind, and given his own approval before it was presented to the church. It never came direct from Rigdon to the church. David Whitmer who was one of the "Three Witnesses of the Book of Mormon" continued to affirm to the day of his death that he had seen the gold plates, etc., but in his old age, long after he had been excommunicated from the church and had begun a new faction, he came to the conclusion that some of the Prophet's revelations "were from God, some from man, and some from the devil." He knew the Prophet well, before Rigdon came on the scene, and was on intimate terms with him for a number of years afterwards. The following is his opinion of Rigdon's influence on the Prophet:

The next grievous error which crept into the church was in ordaining High Priests in June, 1831. This error was introduced at the instigation of Sidney Rigdon. The office of High Priest was never spoken of, and never

thought of being established in the church until Rigdon came in... Rigdon was a thorough Bible scholar, a man of fine education, and a powerful orator. He soon worked himself deep into Brother Joseph's affections and had more influence over him than any other living man. He was Brother Joseph's private counsellor, and his most intimate friend and brother for some time after they met. Brother Joseph rejoiced, believing that the Lord had sent to him this great and mighty man, Sidney Rigdon, to help him in the work. Poor Brother Joseph! He was mistaken about this, and likewise all the brethren were mistaken; for in a few years we found out different... In Kirtland, Ohio, in 1831, 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 and that doctrine, and of course a revelation would always come just as they desired it.¹

Whatever influence Rigdon might have had on the institution of the High Priests office, one thing is certain: David Whitmer had no use for the office or that "great and mighty man", Sidney Rigdon.

One of the revelations that has always been most highly prized by the Mormons was given to the Prophet and Sidney Rigdon shortly after their return from Missouri. It came to them while they were busily engaged on the "Inspired Translation" of the Bible, and is commonly spoken of as the "vision of the degrees of glory." The Mormon philosophy of exaltation and universal salvation is based largely upon this vision. Perhaps it is the most frequently quoted of all the revelations that are found within the Doctrine and Covenants. The following are a few of the one hundred and nineteen verses which make up its length:

11) We, Joseph Smith, Jr., and Sidney Rigdon, being in the spirit on the sixteenth of February,... by the power of the Spirit our eyes were opened...

14) ... the record which we bear is the fullness of the gospel of Jesus Christ, who is the Son, whom we saw and with whom we conversed in the heavenly vision...

1. David Whitmer's An Address to All Believers in Christ, pp. 44-45. Even the orthodox Mormons admit that the Prophet was influenced in many ways by his environment. His translations and visions, etc., were supposed to have come from God, but after he had thought, studied, prayed, and used all his human faculties first--then the revelation on the subject. "After intense mental anxiety and divine inspiration the Prophet was able to get the idea from the ancient records... He was no puppet, no 'yes' man, who simply pushed the pen as the spirit moved him. Much of the inspiration was from within... He was no mere automaton." From a L.D.S. monograph, p. 2.

19) And while we meditated upon these things, the Lord touched the eyes of our understanding and they were opened, and the glory of the Lord shone round about;

20) And we beheld the glory of the Son...

21) And saw the holy angels... worshipping God.

22) And now, after the many testimonies which have been given of him, this is the testimony last of all, which we give of him that he lives;

23) For we saw him, even on the right hand of God, and we heard the voice bearing record that he is the Only Begotten of the Father--

89) And thus we saw in the heavenly vision, the glory of the telestial, which surpasses all understanding...

91) And... we saw the glory of the terrestrial...

92) And thus we saw the glory of the celestial, which excels in all things--where God, even the Father reigns upon his throne for ever and ever...¹

Within a range of one month Rigdon's experiences literally go from the sublime to the tragic. Thirty-seven days after the "vision of the degrees of glory" a half-intoxicated mob led by Symonds Ryder² broke into the house of Rigdon, pulled him from his bed and dragged him by the heels, permitting his head to knock against the frozen ground until he was unconscious. One's mind immediately goes back to the accident during his boyhood days when his foot was entangled in the stirrup and the frightened horse dragged him along the country road. The Prophet was also a victim of the mob violence on this occasion. He recorded the incident in his journal, stating that as his

1. See Doctrine & Covenants, Section 76; also, Evening and Morning Star, 1835, pp. 226-30.

Ryder and his friend Ezra Booth joined the Mormons at an early date and according to Kennedy their surrender to Mormonism "Caused an excitement almost equal to that which followed the fall of Rigdon," (p. 103-104). These two friends made the long journey to Independence with the other elders when the land was dedicated by Rigdon. When they returned they apostatized; Booth wrote long "letters" against the Mormons which were published in the Ohio Star. Ryder was the ring-leader, according to J. Smith, of the mob violence related above. Ryder came into the church after witnessing a miracle; he lost faith in the Prophet when a divine revelation appeared which spelled his name "Rider." See Hayden's book, pp. 245; 257. He rose to an important place in the Disciples Church later.

enemies forced him along he saw "Rigdon stretched out on the ground, whither they had dragged him by the heels. I supposed he was dead." How far the mobbers went with their attack upon Rigdon we do not know. Perhaps his treatment was quite as severe as that received by the Prophet who was not only beaten, but when completely stripped of his clothing was pounced upon by a savage creature who scratched him furiously, exclaiming, "God damn ye, that's the way the Holy Ghost falls on folks." This was followed with a generous application of tar and feathers.¹

The Prophet spent the remainder of the night cleaning his body and nursing his cuts and bruises, and to the surprise of his enemies he preached the following day. But such was not the case with Rigdon. No friend has written the details of his suffering on that occasion, but from the Prophet's journal we glean the following:

The next morning I went to see Elder Rigdon, and found him crazy, and his head highly inflamed, for they had dragged him by his heels, and those too, so high from the ground that he could not raise his head from the rough frozen surface, which lacerated it exceedingly; and when he saw me he called to his wife to bring a razor. She asked him what he wanted of it; and he said to kill me. Sister Rigdon left the room, and he asked me to bring his razor; I asked him what he wanted of it and he replied he wanted to kill his wife; and he continued delirious some days.²

Very likely Mother Smith did not remember in later years, when she narrated the life of her son, Joseph, that Rigdon was still a sick man when he left the mob scene of Hiram for Kirtland where he and his sick family might be more secure. For she records his strange actions upon his arrival as if they were the results of perversity rather than of temporary insanity:

Immediately after Sidney's arrival at Kirtland, we met for the purpose of holding a prayer meeting... At last he came in, seemingly much agitated. He did not go to the stand but began to pace back and forth through the house. My husband said, "Brother Sidney, we should like to hear a discourse from you today." Brother Rigdon replied in a tone of excitement, "The keys of the kingdom are rent from the church, and there shall not be a prayer put up in this house today." "Oh, no!" said Mr. Smith, "I hope not!"

1. Lucy Smith, Joseph Smith the Prophet, pp. 192-94; Church History, I, 261-66. J. Smith claimed that the death of one of his adopted children was caused from exposure during the mobbing scene.

2. Church History (L.D.S.), I, 265.

"I tell you they are," rejoined Elder Rigdon, "and no man or woman shall put up a prayer in this place today." The brethren stared and turned pale and the sisters cried... "I tell you again," said Sidney, with much feeling, "the keys of the kingdom are taken from you, and never will you have them again until you build me a new house." Hyrum was vexed at this frivolous nonsense, and... (Said) "I'll put a stop to this fuss pretty quick; I'm going for Joseph." ... On his (Joseph's) arrival there he... went to the stand, and informed the brethren that they were under a great mistake... "And, as for the keys of the kingdom... I, myself, hold the keys of the Last Dispensation, and will forever hold them, both in time and in eternity."... he appointed a council to sit the next day by which Sidney was tried for having lied in the name of the Lord... Joseph told him he must suffer for what he had done, that he should be delivered over to the buffetings of Satan, who would handle him as one man handleth another, that the less priesthood he had, the better it would be for him, and that it would be well for him to give up his license. This counsel Sidney complied with, yet he had to suffer for his folly, for according to his own account, he was dragged out of bed by the devil, three times in one night, by his heels. Whether this be true or not, one thing is certain, his contrition of soul was as great as a man could well live through. After he had sufficiently humbled himself, he received another license.¹

If our information were complete on the intimate details of Rigdon's life we would likely discover that whenever he suffered from any severe physical shock he was temporarily insane. Because of his natural tendency at all times towards emotionalism and his love for apocalyptic and allegorical literature, his intimate friends may not have been careful in discriminating between his rational and his irrational acts and statements. When he was in his natural state of mind he was able to call on governors and judges and impress them highly with his intelligent conversation. Travelers of wide experience called at Nauvoo while he was there and later wrote complimentary descriptions of his learning and personality. On the other hand some of his statements that were made when he was not in good health show evidence of insanity.

But whether he was rational or otherwise, the humiliation which he was forced to undergo at Kirtland, including the temporary surrender of his license, must have been a severe blow to his influence and leadership among

1. L. Smith, Life of the Prophet, pp. 195-96.

those who witnessed it. As we have already observed, he was rebuked by revelation for the description which he wrote of Zion--was characterized as "exalting himself," and was warned to either write an acceptable description or suffer deposition.¹ This divine rebuke was not so dangerous, in some respects, as the result of the rebuke by the local Elders and the demand by his peers for his license. Even the Prophet was rebuked by revelation at times but this did not diminish his prestige among his followers. It only strengthened their confidence in his claims of divine communication.

Rigdon was temporarily removed from this unpleasant scene by the menace of local anti-Mormon agitators. He and the Prophet made their second journey to Missouri, going by way of Wheeling, Virginia, down to St. Louis and then by stage coach to Independence. This circuitous route was made to avoid enemies. From the Prophet's journal we learn that Rigdon preached two "powerful sermons" during their month's visit at Independence.

The opposition that opened with tar and feathers at Hiram died down while Rigdon and the Prophet were away, and after their return they continued their activities with renewed energy and confidence. By July 2, 1833, the "Inspired Translation" was finished.² This task had occupied a large portion of their time from their first meeting together down to this period. From

1. See page 74, note 2.

2. July 2, 1833, Rigdon wrote the following to the brethren in Zion: "I, Sidney, write this in great haste, in answer to yours to Brother Joseph, as I am going off immediately, in company with Brother Frederick, to proclaim the gospel; we think of starting tomorrow. Having finished the translation of the Bible, a few hours since, and needing some recreation, we know of no way we can spend our time more to divine acceptance than endeavoring to build up his Zion, in these last days, as we are not willing to idle any time away, which can be spent to useful purposes. Doors are open continually for proclaiming; the spirit of bitterness among the people is fast subsiding, and a spirit of inquiry is taking its place. I proclaimed last Sunday at Chardon, our county seat. I had a court-house. There was a general turnout, good attention, and a pressing invitation for more meetings, which will be granted if the Lord will, when we return from this tour." (See Journal of History, III, 281.)

the completion of the inspired version until 1838, Rigdon was very active in and about Kirtland. He seems to have completely surmounted the obstacles incident to his earlier embarrassment. In March 18, (1833), he was "ordained and set apart" by the Prophet as the first counselor in the Presidency, the office which was second only to that of the President, and he held it until the death of the Prophet.

Magazines and a weekly newspaper were started to which Rigdon was one of the important contributors.¹ During this period he is given the credit for "raising up and presiding over" a branch in Medina County, Ohio. In company with the Prophet and others, he took missionary tours into upper Canada, Western Missouri, New England² and into the middle states. The great assistance he was to the Prophet on these missionary tours, is reflected in a revelation (Oct. 12, 1833). It reads:

And it is expedient in me that you, my servant Sidney, should be a spokesman unto this people; yea, verily, I will ordain you unto this calling, even to be a spokesman unto my servant Joseph; and I will give unto him power to be mighty in testimony; and I will give unto thee power to be mighty in expounding all Scriptures, that thou mayest be a spokesman unto him, and he shall be a revelator unto thee, that thou mayest know the certainty of all things pertaining to the things of my kingdom on earth.³

During the Kirtland period and following the organization of "The First Presidency" of which Joseph Smith was president, Rigdon, first counselor and Frederick G. Williams second counselor, a rapid growth takes place in the institution of administrative quorums in the church. The "Quorum of the twelve apostles" was instituted and its members were sent forth "to prune the vineyard for the last time." The "quorum of the Seventy" and the office of

1. The Evening and Morning Star; The Messenger and Advocate; The Elders' Journal; and the newspapers: The Upper Missouri Advertiser; The Northern Times.

2. The one trip which they made together to Salem, Mass., was partly in search of some treasure that was supposed to have been buried by a deceased widow. See Roberts, op. cit., I, 411.

3. Doctrines and Covenants, Section 100:9-11.

"patriarch" were also revealed by revelation. The "Book of Abraham" was translated by the Prophet from some ancient papyrus that fell into his hands. The "United Order" was enlarged and the tithing system of the Mormons was started on its way. The "High Council," the judiciary element in the church, was also formed at this period and the first Mormon temple was erected.¹ Rigdon played an important part in all this activity.

However, his interests were not limited to church polity and the office of "Spokesman" to the Prophet. First and foremost, he was a preacher. The Prophet's journal abounds with notations like the following: "We heard an animated discourse delivered by President Rigdon;"² "Elder Rigdon entertained a large congregation of Saints with an interesting discourse upon the Fullness of Times." "President Rigdon rose and delivered a forcible address, suited to the occasion;" "President Rigdon delivered a fine discourse on the occasion and much solemnity prevailed;" "He urged the people to acknowledge me as a Prophet and seer;" etc.

During this same period Rigdon attended the "School of the Prophets," he studied Hebrew and perhaps some Greek, and at odd times sat as the presiding officer in the "High Council" to hear church trials.³ He was a teacher as well as a student and during the winter of 1834-35, he was one of the trustees and conductors of the "Kirtland School," wherein penmanship, arithmetic, English grammar, and geography were taught.⁴ Rigdon may have been the author of the "Lectures on Faith" which were studied by the Elders

1. All of these elements have remained a vital part of Mormonism up to the present (1931) time, except the "United Order," and the Mormons still teach that at a future date it shall again be practiced in the church.

2. Church History, II, 52, 378, 390, 408, 416.

3. This training in Hebrew and Greek came after he and the Prophet had finished the "Inspired Translation." Their study in this field lasted but a few weeks. See L.D.S. Church History, II, 4, 19, 21, 28.

4. Pancoast, The Mormons at Kirtland, says that the Mormons were equal if not in advance to their gentile neighbors in providing educational opportunities.

and held in high importance by the church for many years.¹ In short, he was closely allied with the Prophet in all the church activities during this time, except in the translation of the "Papyrus which contained the Book of Abraham," and the three months' journey of the two hundred armed men who went to Missouri to replace the 1200 Mormon refugees on their land in Jackson County.² In the first of these two exceptions, the Prophet did not need him, and in the last case Rigdon might have proved more troublesome than the Missourians. Armed men and bombastic oratory do not go well together if, when combined, they are still in the minority. Rigdon traveled among the Eastern branches of the church, collecting money and supplies for the Mormon exiles in Missouri; he encouraged men to arm and equip themselves for the long over-land journey, but the Prophet saw to it that his first counselor remained in Kirtland with a few old men, the temple workers, and the women and children while he led "Zion's Camp" to the border of the Lamanites.³

However, although zealous oratory was out of place (1834) among armed men who were praying for achievement with neutrality, it did have an important function among the few hundred Mormons who built their \$40,000 temple (1833-1836) with few material resources. Rigdon's sermons fed the fervent millennial hope and expectancy. The following "brief" of a sermon he delivered at Norton, Ohio, in 1834, may serve as a sample of the theme which was always favored by him, namely, the gathering of Israel and the coming of the Lord:

1. I think Mormon historians generally credit Rigdon with the authorship of these "Lectures on Faith." The anti-Mormon, Braden, calls them "the only sensible thing in Mormonism," and claims they contain "Campbellite" theology. The Mormons have discarded them. (See Braden-Kelley Debate, p. 85)

2. See note on page 96.

3. Whitmer says that at this time Rigdon suggested the name, "Latter Day Saints" for the church. Up to this time it had been called "The church of Christ" or the "Mormonites." See "An Address to all Believers in Christ." The Statement in the "Reorganized" L.D.S. Church History, I, 453-54, agrees with Whitmer's statement. Eventually, the name "The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints" (1838) became the official title. For the sake of brevity, I have used the nickname "Mormon" in this paper.

Elder Rigdon addressed the conference and said: On two points hang all the revelations that have ever been given, and these are the two advents of the Messiah. The first is past, and the second is now just before us; and consequently those who desire a part in this era which the angels desired to look into, have to be assembled with the saints; for if they are not gathered they must wail because of His coming. There is no part of His creation which will not feel a shock at this grand display of his power, for the ancient Saints will reign with Christ a thousand years. The gathered Saints will dwell under that reign, and those who are not gathered may expect to endure His wrath that length of time; for the rest of the dead are not to live till the thousand years are ended... These are the days of vengeance, as were the days of Jeremiah... (He then spoke on)... the former covenants to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, and others of the ancients, which were to be realized in the last days... (and the) endowment of the Elders with power from on high according to former promises, and the spreading of the word of the Lord to the four winds.¹

Sometimes Rigdon would resort to more eloquent means than could be produced through oratory. One of the workers on the temple says that "Looking at the sufferings and poverty of the church, he frequently used to go upon the walls of the building both by night and day and frequently wetting the walls with his tears, crying aloud to the Almighty to send means whereby we might accomplish the building."² Special "Visions," "revelations," and "endowments" were promised to the church if they would build "A house of the Lord." The Mormons toiled and sacrificed in order to receive the fulfillment of these miraculous promises. Even before the structure was completed, the Prophet and his followers laid claims to divine approval. Rigdon, as is evident from the contents of the Prophet's journal, was an active participant in these supernatural demonstrations and celestial endowments.

About three o'clock P.M. (the Prophet writes) I dismissed the school, and the Presidency³ retired to the attic story of the printing office, where we attended the ordinance of washing our bodies in pure water. We also perfumed our bodies and our heads in the name of the Lord. At candle-light I met with the Presidency at the west room, in the Temple, to attend to the

1. Church History, II, 53.

2. A statement by H. C. Kimball quoted in Journal of History, III, No. 3, 282.

3. The Prophet and his two counselors constitute the "First Presidency" so wherever that name appears, during this period, Rigdon is always included. In connection with this thought it is well to say that many long "letters" were written to the various branches of the church in "Zion" and elsewhere and it is only fair to give Rigdon credit for having done at least one-third of the work attached to this phase of the activity. These general letters appear above the name of "The Presidency" so there is no way of telling who did most of the writing.

ordinance of anointing our heads with holy oil; also the Councils of Kirtland and Zion met in the two adjoining rooms, and waited in prayer while we attended to the ordinance. I took the oil in my left hand, Father Smith being seated before me, and the remainder of the Presidency encircled him round about. We then stretched our right hands toward heaven, and blessed the oil, and consecrated it in the name of Jesus Christ... But as Paul, so say I, let us come to visions and revelations. The heavens were opened upon us, and I beheld the celestial kingdom of God and the glory thereof, whether in the body or out I cannot tell...¹ also (saw) the blazing throne of God, whereon was seated the Father and the Son.²

The visions were not limited to the Prophet and his two counselors, Rigdon and Williams. "The heavens were opened unto Elder Sylvester Smith, and he, leaping up, exclaimed; 'The horsemen of Israel and the chariots thereof.'" And when Rigdon closed "the services of the evening by invoking the blessing of heaven upon the Lord's anointed, which he did in an eloquent manner; the congregation shouted a long hosannah; the gift of tongues fell upon them in mighty power and angels mingled their voices with the congregation." A few days later when the "Twelve Apostles and the Seven Presidents" had finished their sealing prayer, Rigdon then sealed them with uplifted hands, cried hosanna and the congregation joined him as he shouted "hosanna to God and the Lamb, and glory to God in the highest." On this occasion, continues the Prophet,

Elder Roger Orton saw a mighty angel riding upon a horse of fire, with a flaming sword in his hand, followed by five others, encircled the house, protected the Saints, even the Lord's anointed, from the power of Satan and a host of evil spirits which were striving to disturb the saints.³

While these strange phenomena were occurring in the evening the leading Elders were studying Hebrew during the day time under the direction of the Hebrew scholar, Professor Seixas. After a beginning had been made the professor segregated his students into two sections; Rigdon and the Prophet were in his advanced class.

1. Ibid.

2. See Church History, II, 379-93

3. Ibid.

On the day appointed to dedicate the temple, people began to gather at an early hour. Several hundred were waiting to enter when the doors were finally opened. About one thousand were permitted to enter, then the doors were closed and the remainder of the crowd more than filled the school house. The Mormons still had money left¹ for at that first dedicatory service \$963 were contributed. This was a day of great expectancy and they were not disappointed. Rigdon gave them an oration they long remembered. One of the listeners has written that,

We can truly say no one unacquainted with the manner of delivery and style of our speaker can from reading, form any adequate idea of the powerful effect he is capable of producing in the minds of his hearers; and to say on this occasion he showed himself master of his subject and did well, would be doing him injustice, to say he acquitted himself with honor or did very well, would be detracting from his real merit; and to say that he did exceedingly well, would be only halting praise.²

He opened the services by reading from the 96th and 24th Psalms, and after the choir sang he prayed. During this prayer Frederick G. Williams saw an angel enter the window and sit by him. Rigdon then read from Matthew 18:18-20 and began his sermon which lasted two hours and one-half.

At one time, in the course of his remarks (so writes the Prophet), he was rather pathetic, and drew tears from many eyes. He was then taking a retrospective view of the toils, privations, and anxieties of those who had labored upon the walls of the house to erect them... He admitted there were many houses, many sufficiently large, built for the worship of God, but not one except this, on the whole face of the earth, that was built by divine revelation.³

After the Prophet read the long dedicatory prayer which had been given by revelation the choir sang again, the Lord's Supper was administered,

1. Bancroft, History of Utah, writes of the temple (p. 112), "The building of this structure by a few hundred persons, who, during the period between 1832 and 1836, contributed voluntarily of their money, material, or labor, the women knitting and spinning and making garments for the men who worked on the temple, was regarded with wonder throughout all northern Ohio." Tullidge, Women of Mormondom, p. 82, writes: "From the day the ground was broken for laying the foundation for the temple until its dedication on the 27th of March, 1836, the work was vigorously prosecuted. With very little capital except brain, bone, and sinew, combined with unwavering trust in God, men, women and children worked with their might; while the brethren labored in their departments, the sisters were actively engaged in boarding and clothing workmen not otherwise provided for, etc." See Roberts, op. cit., B. Young was a chief workman.

2. Journal of History, III, 283.

3. Church History, II, 415.

and all members partook of it. "Rigdon," continues the Prophet's narrative, "Then made a few appropriate closing remarks, and a short prayer, at the close of which we sealed the proceedings of the day by shouting 'hosanna, hosanna, hosanna, to God and the Lamb', three times, sealing it each time with Amen, Amen, Amen."

Much could be written on the establishment of the ordinance of feet-washing, etc., the appearance of Jesus, Elijah, Moses, and Elias, but suffice to say that Rigdon was active in it all. The fact that he was chosen to give the opening address at the dedicatory services shows where he stood in the estimation of the Prophet and his followers.

If the saying is true that "men cannot live by bread alone" the reverse is equally true. Man cannot live by visions and revelations alone. The Mormons at Kirtland were confronted with a serious economic problem other than raising money for the temple. Their brethren in Missouri needed assistance when they were driven from Jackson County, and the steady stream of converts who were daily arriving with high hearts, but with little cash, did not lessen the economic burden. Pancoast has written that

Soon the results of the missionary workers, whom Smith sent out to convert the people and teach the doctrine of gathering, began to be felt in Kirtland. They came, men, women, and children, in every conceivable manner. One almost wondered if the world were centering at Kirtland. Every available house, shop, hut, or barn was filled to its utmost capacity. Even boxes were roughly extemporized and used for shelter till something more permanent could be secured.¹

The millennial hope and any economic system that has the characteristics of communism appears most attractively to people of medium or low economic status. Some of the Mormons who were "caught in the gospel net" were notable exceptions, but men like John Tanner who lent the Prophet \$2,000, the Temple Committee \$13,000, donated liberally to the Temple Fund and later signed a note for \$30,000 worth of merchandise, were rare indeed.² The motions which

1. The Mormons at Kirtland, --Master's thesis, p. 71. (Found in Western Reserve University).

2. Werner, Brigham Young, p. 92; P.P.Pratt in his Autobiography, p. 165 (cont'd) on next page.

were passed by the Prophet and his associates in December 1836, describe the situation more clearly than the account of Tanner's generosity:

The following motions were made and carried by the unanimous voice of the assembly: First--That it has been the case that a very improper and unchristianlike course of conduct has been pursued by the Elders of this Church, and the churches abroad, in sending their poor from among them to this place without the necessary means of subsistence. Whereas the Church in this place being poor from the beginning, having had to pay an extortionate price for their lands, etc., etc.,... We have borne our part of this burden, and it becomes the duty, henceforth, of all the churches abroad to provide for those who are objects of charity...¹

During the year 1837 the Mormons at Kirtland found themselves kneeling beside their gentile neighbors in the worship of Mammon. Land speculation became rife in various parts of the country and especially so in Northern Ohio. "Wild cat" banks sprang up all over the country and people felt rich with their paper securities. Within a few months a great change occurred in Kirtland. A missionary who had been away but a few months reports the following conditions when he returned:

We were very much grieved on our arrival in Kirtland, to see the speculation that was prevailing in the Church. Trade and traffic seemed to engross the time and attention of the Saints. When we left Kirtland a city lot was worth about \$150; but on our return, to astonishment, the same lot was said to be worth from \$500 to \$1,000, according to location; and some men, who when I left, could hardly get food to eat, I found on my return to be men of supposed great wealth; in fact, everything in the place seemed to be moving in great prosperity, and all seemed determined to become rich.²

Rigdon saw little danger in the wild speculation and "paper profits." With his characteristic enthusiasm he called attention to the "prosperity" which was manifest, and "declared that the glory of the latter-days was now being ushered in, and that Zion would soon become the glory of the whole earth; when the Lord for silver would bring gold; for iron, brass and

2 (cont'd from page 89) mentions the Saints in Toronto placing "several hundred dollars" in his hands secretly as they shook hands with him on his departure for Kirtland. Linn, The Mormons, p. 111, mentions a Vienna Jacques who deposited \$1500 with the Prophet. When the Prophet fled from Kirtland, B. Young collected \$300 from a Mr. Tomlison for him, (see Werner, op. cit., p. 95). The Prophet's Journal for June 25, 1835, reads: "There was a meeting in Kirtland to subscribe for the building of the Temple; and \$6,232.50 was added to the list... which was paid within one hour and the people were astonished. The prophet gave \$500, but Rigdon is not mentioned.

1. Church History, II, 468-69.
 2. Life of H. C. Kimball, p. 111.

for stones, iron."¹ The leading Elders promoted the establishment of a steam sawmill and a tannery; the mercantile establishments were enlarged with stock purchased on credit. Lands adjoining Kirtland were purchased at excessively high prices with the intention of disposing of them to the expected gathering of converts from the East and elsewhere. But as we have seen, most of the "newcomers" were not financial assets.

Besides the above ventures, all of which failed, the leading Elders, an expression which always includes Rigdon, applied to the Ohio State Legislature for a charter for the "Kirtland Safety Society Bank." Being refused they proceeded to organize a "Stock Industrial Company," under which they "proposed the management of their respective occupations consisting of agriculture, mechanical arts, and merchandising." This company became known as the "Kirtland Safety Society Anti-Banking Company,"² and it began to issue notes which were not long accepted by their creditors. The Prophet became treasurer and Rigdon became secretary of the ill-fated concern. This institution became very popular among the Mormons though it was destined to be short lived. Pittsburg bankers sent their agent to Kirtland demanding an immediate redemption of the notes in coin. Secretary Rigdon informed the agent that the notes had been put forth as 'a circulating medium for the accommodation of the people' and that it would be thwarting that purpose to call any of it in. It is needless to add that in a short time the doors of the institution were closed. "The sheriff was a frequent visitor at Kirtland and mortgage

1. Roberts, Life of John Taylor, pp. 51-52.

2. The Mormons had their agent purchase the stamps, etc. for the bank notes before the decision was made by the State Legislature. When their application for the bank Charter was rejected they decided to save the cost of purchasing new plates so they used the plates intended for the "Kirtland Safety Bank" and using a stamp inserted the "anti" and "ing" before and after the word bank. Anti-Mormon writers have usually mentioned the small letters which preceded and followed the word "bank" without informing the reader of the circumstances under which they were introduced. For detailed account see Roberts, Comprehensive History, I, 400-403.

foreclosures followed each other in surprising frequency." The Prophet and Rigdon were arrested upon a charge of violating the banking laws of the State, were adjudged guilty in the Geauga County Court, but appealed from the decision on the ground that the "Kirtland Safety Society" was not a bank. The case was never ruled upon by the courts for reasons which will follow.

When the "Safety Society" failed many of the leading Mormons turned on the Prophet and Rigdon and contention became rife. Those who suffered loss declared "that the 'Bank' had been instituted by the will of God and let men do what they would it would never fail." The Prophet denied that he had ever made such a claim for the institution or had encouraged the belief in others. He also accused his private secretary, Warren Parrish, who had been one of the "Bank" officials, with stealing \$25,000. Some of the "reform" party which arose did not save their criticism for the quiet fireside but loudly denounced the Prophet and Rigdon publicly. Brigham Young's life was threatened because he held to the Prophet. On one Sabbath day the "Reformers" headed by Parrish,

Came into the temple armed with pistols and bowieknives and seated themselves together in the Aaronic pulpits... A fearful scene ensued--... Parrish, John Boynton and others drew their pistols and bowie-knives... Boynton said he would blow out the brains of the first man who dared to lay hands on him.¹

Rigdon and the Prophet made a bold stand against the rising opposition, but it was impossible for them to correct the economic evils and stamp out the rising apostacy. Their very lives were in danger from attacks by men who had been called "Apostles." An eye witness to the final public appearance of Smith and Rigdon in the temple, which their influence and energy had done so much to create, states that it was in

December, on a Sabbath directly preceding their flight by night. Schism, apostacy, secret enmity, malice, and even outspoken opposition con-

1. Biography of Lorenzo Snow; for full details of the closing scenes in Kirtland see Kennedy's Early Days of Mormonism, pp. 162-69; and Roberts' Comprehensive History, I, Ch. 31.

fronted them in the church, while debt, revenge, arrest, prosecution, and punishment threatened from the world without... There could be no show of weakness on his (J. Smith's) part... and he played his game with boldness and courage clear on to its tragic end. Rigdon had been sick, and was aided to his seat by the steadying arms of his friends. The debate was long and stormy... Rigdon's address was not soon forgotten by those who heard it. Physical weakness was upon him, but the pathos of his plea and power of his denunciation swayed the feelings and shook the judgment of his hearers as never in the old days of peace, and when he had finished and was led out, a perfect silence reigned in the temple.¹

Emotional oratory and displays of courage were of little avail and no one realized this more clearly than the Prophet. He said that "something must be done to save the church."² Among other things he and his first Counselor mounted their horses in the night of January 12, 1838, and fled from the city, leaving lawsuits, apostates, and loyal friends behind them. When their flight was discovered they were pursued by their enemies for a great distance, crossing their trail at close quarters on several occasions. While they remained in hiding their families overtook them with covered wagons and then they proceeded on their way to far West Missouri. The Prophet arrived at his destination in March, but due to sickness in the Rigdon family their journey was "tedious, and his family suffered many afflictions."

A street in Kirtland running directly past the temple had been named "Rigdon Street." Through a revelation he had been apportioned some

1. Statement made by L. E. Miller, then an aged resident of Painesville, Ohio, to Kennedy. See the latter's book, Early Days of Mormonism, pp. 166-167.

2. No event in the life of Joseph Smith shows more clearly his resourcefulness than his action at this time. When the church appeared to be completely "on the rocks" he sent the first missionaries to England. Stenhouse, The Rocky Mountain Saints, maintains that it was the English converts that saved the church. Kennedy (P. 220) says that by 1843 there were 10,000 Mormons in England. At the close of a year's missionary work, Wilford Woodruff could truthfully record: I have traveled 4,469 miles, held 230 meetings, established 53 places for preaching, planted 47 churches, baptized 336 persons under my own hands and assisted at the baptism of 86 others... I assisted in procuring \$1,000 for the publication of 3,000 copies of the Hymn Book, 5,000 copies of the Book of Mormon, for the printing of the Millennial Star, assisted 200 Saints to emigrate to Nauvoo." Cowley's Wilford Woodruff, p. 134. This occurred in the year 1840. From the very beginning up to the present time the "British Mission" has been one of the most fruitful in the Mormon Church. These achievements were made by Missionaries who traveled "without purse or scrip."

property in the allotments which were made when the "United Order" was instituted; it said,

Let my servant Felagoram (Sidney Rigdon) have apportioned unto him the place where he now resides and the lot of Tahhanes (the tannery) for his stewardship, for his support while he is laboring in my vineyard... And this stewardship and blessing, I, the Lord, confer upon my servant Felagoram for a blessing upon him and his seed after him... inasmuch as he shall be humble before me.¹

Rigdon also was to receive certain profits from the printing concern at one time. We read of his frequently performing marriages² which are always profitable to preachers. But whatever the sources or the amounts of money he received during the Kirtland period, he doubtless earned every penny of it. The "Bank" failure did not enrich its treasurer or the secretary. Both the Prophet and Rigdon were practically penniless when they fled from the city. Friends came to their aid along the way and granted them financial assistance to remove their families to Missouri; and upon their arrival they were in such a sorry plight the members shared their farm lands with them.³

If Rigdon ever received any "kingdom" for his suffering, toil, and privations for the Mormon cause, it was a kingdom "not of this world."⁴

1. Doctrine and Covenants, Sec. 104:19-23

2. During the Kirtland Period, Rigdon performed the marriage ceremony of Brigham Young and Mary Ann Angel. At that time Brigham Young was the "carpenter, painter, and glazier" who worked on the temple and went on missionary tours at odd times. He showed no signs of being Rigdon's rival at that early date.

3. The Mormons in Missouri voted \$1,100 and an eighty acre lot of land to Rigdon and the same amount to Joseph Smith. (See Church History, III, 32). I cannot find where Joseph Smith ever returned to Kirtland, but in 1845 Rigdon revisited the place and was treated well. The Mormon leaders settled their "personal" debts at Kirtland through their agent, Colonel Oliver Granger. The following is a bit of evidence to the fact that some honest attempt was made to pay their debts. "To whom it may concern. This may certify that during the year of eighteen hundred and thirty-seven, I had dealings with Messrs. Joseph Smith, Junior, and Sidney Rigdon, together with other members of the (Mormon) society, to the amount of about three thousand dollars, and during the spring of eighteen hundred and thirty-eight, I have received my pay in full of Colonel Oliver Granger to my satisfaction. And I would here remark that it is due Messrs. Smith and Rigdon, and the (Mormon) society generally, I say that they have ever dealt honorably and fair with me." John W. Hawden, Painesville, Geauga County, Ohio, October 27, 1838. (See L.D.S. Church History, I, 164-65, 174; see also Messenger and Advocate of the Church of Christ, I, No. 10, 145.)

4. The following account taken from Werner's Brigham Young, p. 117, is a list of the Prophet's possessions at one time during the Nauvoo period

(Continued) when he was at the height of his power. "Old Charley, a horse given to him several years before in Kirtland; two pet deer, two old turkeys, and four young ones, an old cow given to him by a brother in Missouri, old Major, a dog; his wife, children, and a little household furniture." Perhaps the most remunerative position that Rigdon ever held was that of Postmaster of Nauvoo. Stenhouse, an apostate Mormon and author of The Rocky Mountain Saints, page 72, says of the failure of the "Kirtland Safety Society Anti-Banking Company,"... "That Joseph Smith and Sidney Rigdon contemplated in that experiment a deliberate swindle, is very inharmonious with their life and programme at that period."

CHAPTER V

SIDNEY RIGDON--THE MORMON PREACHER

(MISSOURI PERIOD, 1838)

On April 4, 1838, after three months of sickness, besides the usual discomforts incident to winter travel in covered wagons, the Rigdon family drove into Far West, Missouri. This was Rigdon's fourth and last trip to that section of America.¹ Since Rigdon's first visit to Missouri in 1831, when he dedicated the land of Zion, hundreds of Mormons had flocked to that state. When the old settlers of Jackson County drove them from their borders in 1833 there were over twelve hundred who sought refuge in the surrounding counties. By 1837 they were becoming so numerous in Clay County, where at first they had been welcomed and assisted, that the old settlers in that vicinity became alarmed and firmly requested them to move on to less settled districts and thus avoid civil war. The Mormons took their advice and moved from Clay to the unsettled region northward which was soon organized into a new county and given the name of Caldwell. In this way they avoided a repetition of their recent experience in Jackson County.

1. See pages 73 and 74 for a detailed account of his first visit. In April 1832, shortly after he was mobbed at Hiram, Ohio, he and the Prophet arrived at Independence where they remained for about one month, directing the establishment of communities and perfecting the local church organizations, etc. This trip also served as a temporary escape for Rigdon from the embarrassment which doubtless was incident to having his license taken away from him a short time before in Kirtland. His third trip was with the Prophet in September, 1837, at which time the Mormons were leaving Clay County. On this occasion he assisted in forming some of the new settlements in Caldwell County. This trip also served as a temporary escape from the trouble which was rising at Kirtland. As I have shown in the last chapter, Rigdon and the Prophet fled from Kirtland within a month after their last trip to Missouri. Instead of the Kirtland trouble "blowing over" during their absence it got worse. In 1834 the Prophet made a trip to Missouri with "Zion's Army" to restore the Mormons unto their lands in Jackson County. On that occasion Rigdon was left in Kirtland. For the incidents connected with Zion's Army see pages 98-101 of this thesis.

The Mormon center, "Far West," was well named. All of western Missouri was sparsely settled, but the newly formed County of Caldwell was practically uninhabited before the Mormons began to pour into that section in 1837. At once they began making permanent settlements. Log and frame dwelling houses came into existence quickly; schools and various shops to serve pioneer needs were ready for the public shortly after their arrival.

The Mormons have always been successful pioneers wherever they have gone. When Rigdon arrived in Far West he found it to be a vigorous pioneer community.¹ Land was worth \$10.00 per acre within the close vicinity of the town. The Mormons had political control of the entire County for the simple reason that they were practically the only inhabitants. The county clerk, two judges, thirteen magistrates and all the militia officers were members of the sect. And although they had not recovered any of their property losses in Jackson County they soon controlled thousands of acres of lands through loans and their cooperative industry.

Non-Mormon writers have frequently misinterpreted the facts pertaining to the Mormon situation in Caldwell County up to the first signs of the beginning of the "Mormon War" in August 1838. The apparent peace which existed before Rigdon and the Prophet arrived to make Missouri their headquarters, was no proof that the Mormons and the Missourians had settled their differences between themselves. The Mormons had been welcome enough in Jackson County at first, but when their numbers increased to the point where they showed signs of taking the lead politically and economically the old settlers illegally and forcibly drove them out. The exiled unfortunates fled into Clay County where they were well treated at first,

1. In the fall of 1838 there were 3,000 people living in Far West. As late as 1884 it remained just ordinary farm land after the Mormons were driven out. I have no figures since that date. See Roberts, Missouri Persecutions, pp. 174-75, and Linn, The Story of the Mormons, pp. 186-87.

but after three years they were "advised" to move on. On both occasions the Prophet and Rigdon were located in Kirtland. In later years the Mormons were welcomed to Illinois and given considerable assistance to settle in the state, but in a few years they were driven from there also. In the latter case Rigdon was not a member of the church and was not living in Illinois and Joseph Smith had been dead two years. The mere fact that Rigdon and the Prophet arrived in Far West to make it their headquarters does not account for the trouble which resulted in the Mormons being driven from the State. The arrival of the two Mormon leaders did not change the pattern of future events; their coming only hastened the day.¹

1. The Mormon expulsion from Jackson County in 1833, represented the "pattern" which was to re-appear repeatedly until they were driven from the state. The following synopsis of the Jackson County situation is given to throw light on the events which follow: Missouri (especially frontier sections) was composed of people who had Southern traditions and ideals; the Mormons of that period were chiefly northern people with New England traditions and ideals. The frontier contained a large element of lawless people who had found it necessary to leave the older sections of the country where the law was their enemy. The Mormons were a very religious group and, as this thesis has shown, they interpreted everything religiously. It was their religion which brought them to Missouri; their social, economic, and cultural institutions were a vital part of their religion. After the Prophet had told his followers that Independence was the sacred spot where the great temple of the last days should be built, the Mormons began pouring into Jackson County, especially in the vicinity of Independence. That the "New Comers" did many things to irritate the "Old Settlers" there can be no question. Their statements that all churches other than their own were wrong, that church creeds were an abomination in the sight of God, that the Mormons would eventually build a great city of Jackson County, that Christ would come and live among them, and that the land should become their "eternal inheritance," etc., would cause friction. But when they continued to pour into the district until it looked as though some of their claims would be realized, the Missourians were not only irritated but alarmed. The local preacher of Independence, Rev. Pixley, who had been sent out by the "Missionary Society", stirred the people up against his competitive religionists and with similar action which contained the list of grievances against the Mormons and their determination that they should go. They claimed that the Mormons were of the dregs of society, "idle, lazy and vicious" and claimed to receive direct revelation from God; to heal the sick by the laying on of hands; to speak in unknown tongues by inspiration; and to "perform all the wonder-working miracles wrought by the inspired apostles and the prophets of God;"

After the break-up at Kirtland hundreds of Mormons followed their leaders to Missouri. In the spring of 1838, over five hundred left in one body for the Land of Zion. The Mormons did not remain within the con-

(Continued) all of which, the document maintained, "in derogatory of God and religion, and subversive of human reason." Furthermore, it charged the Mormons with inviting "free people of color" to settle in Jackson County, claiming that God had given them the land of the County, that they were conniving with the Indians on the frontier to incite them against the whites, etc. They concluded their list of grievances with the mutual agreement among those who signed the document that "if after timely warning, and receiving an adequate compensation for what property they could not take with them, they shall refuse to leave the County, such means as might be necessary to remove them were to be employed." Their excuse for resorting to mob violence was that "the evil is one that no one could have foreseen, and therefore is unprovided for by the laws; and the delays incident to legislation would put mischief beyond remedy." Most of the statements in the Secret Constitution were untrue or at least highly colored to the detriment of the Mormons. The Mormons were not in sympathy with slavery, yet they were not interfering with the institution; they were not doing any work among the Indians other than attempting to make Christians out of them. Though they were either poor or of humble economic status in life they were not the "dregs" of society and their thrift and industry was one of the chief causes of their troubles. They were purchasing land from the Missourians and did not interpret their revelations to mean that they should become the owners of the county in any other way. In brief, I should say that the entire religious and cultural background of the two peoples made it impossible for them to live harmoniously together. The "Old Settlers" could plainly see that within a very short time they would lose complete control of the county and the surrounding regions if some check was not made upon Mormon immigration and their only way to do this was to use force. The Mormons would not sell their lands to the "Old Settlers" because they looked upon it as holy land. Neither could they purchase the remainder of the county within the time limit given them to do so, but they were anxious for the opportunity, if the time would be extended to a reasonable length. At first the governor (Dunklin) was indignant at the action taken by the "Old Settlers". His attitude encouraged the Prophet at Kirtland to organize "Zion's Army" with the hope of placing his followers back on their Jackson County lands. But when the governor became aware how complex the situation was in the Mormon districts he sided with the majority and wrote to the Mormons that "Public sentiment may become paramount law; and when one man or society of men become so obnoxious to that sentiment as to determine the people to be rid of him or them, it is useless to run counter to it...Your neighbors accuse your people of holding illicit communication with the Indians and of being opposed to slavery. You deny. Whether the charge or the denial is true I cannot tell. The fact exists and your neighbors seem to believe it is true; and whether true or false, the consequences will be the same (if your opponents are not merely gasoonading), unless you can, by your conduct and arguments convince them of your innocence. If you cannot do it, all I can say to you is that in this Republic the vox populi is the vox dei." The outcome of the

finer of Caldwell County but began to spread into adjoining districts where the Old Settlers had farms and political power which they prized very highly. The Mormon troubles in Missouri were the result of a very

(Continued) Jackson County trouble was that men were whipped, tarred and feathered, woman were insulted and houses were burned and property in general destroyed. Eventually the Old Settlers drove the Mormons from their midst like so many cattle. Several were killed out-right and quite a number died from exposure. The Mormons estimated their property loss at \$175,000 and after resorting to every available means to punish the offenders and re-establish themselves on their own lands, they had to admit that they were defeated. Although the people of Clay County permitted the Mormon refugees to take shelter within their midst they began to express dissatisfaction when they learned that the Mormons could not re-establish themselves on their property and may thus become permanent settlers within Clay County. To satisfy their benefactors the Mormon leaders promised the residents of Clay County that they would not remain among them. In June, 1836, the Non-Mormons of the County called a mass meeting and accused the Mormons with "an unfriendly determination to break" their pledge by not only remaining but they had made Clay "County their permanent home and the center and general rendezvous of their people." They said that their chief objections to the Mormons were: (1) Their religion was different from all the other churches; (2) They were eastern men with different manners, habits, customs and even dialect; (3) Were non-slave holders; (4) Kept up a constant communication with the Indian tribes on the frontier. They concluded their list by saying, "We do not vouch for the correctness of these statements, but whether they are true or false, their effect has been the same in exciting our community." The gathering then resolved, "that it is the fixed and settled conviction of this meeting, that unless the people commonly called 'Mormons' will agree to stop immediately the immigration of their people to this country, and take measures to remove themselves from it, a civil war is inevitable. We do not contend that we have the least right under the Constitution and laws of the country to expel them by force. But we would indeed be blind, if we did not foresee that the first blow that is struck at this moment of deep excitement, must and will speedily involve every individual in a war, bearing ruin, woe, and desolation in its course. It matters but little how, where, or by whom the war may begin, when the work of destruction commences, we must all be borne onward by the storm, or crushed beneath its fury." The Mormons then held a meeting and after denying the charges made against them so far as their attitude toward abolition and the Indian questions were concerned they thanked the citizens of Clay County for their past favors and agreed to keep their promise by moving out of the country. Their reply was perfectly satisfactory to the Old Settlers and they assisted the Mormons to raise money necessary for their removal. They also cooperated with them in selecting their new homes in the uninhabited region of Caldwell County.

Most writers on the subject of the "Mormon War" which occurred in the vicinity of Caldwell and Davies Counties in the latter part of 1838, do not take the foregoing facts into consideration. The only difference

complex situation involving economic, religious, political and cultural differences which cannot be fully discussed in this paper. Writers who have not taken the above elements into consideration have explained the Mormon expulsion from Missouri on very superficial grounds and in such cases they usually fix the blame on Joseph Smith, or Sidney Rigdon, or both.

Professor Turner in Mormonism in all Ages well represents such a group. He says (p. 48)

Friendship and mutual confidence were beginning to be restored, until the 14th of March, 1838, when Smith and Rigdon, having been, as we have seen, driven from Ohio, came to "Far West," Missouri. They soon decided to establish new towns in several counties... This offended the citizens... until some of them openly declared that they would not submit their counties to the rule of Joe Smith.

Linn seems to agree with Turner for he writes (p. 196), "With Smith and Rigdon on the ground, if these men had had any tact... the troubles now foreshadowed might easily have been prevented. Every step they took, however, was in the nature of a defiance." Although Mormon and Non-Mormon writers disagree on the causes of the outbreak, all are agreed that hostilities became manifest shortly after Rigdon and the Prophet made Western Missouri their headquarters; and, furthermore, Rigdon was the chief storm center on the Mormon side. Therefore, keeping in mind that he did not change the situation of the Mormons in Missouri, but merely hastened conditions on to their inevitable conclusion, let us follow his movements.

(Continued) between the clash between the Mormons and the Missourians in 1838 and their previous troubles in that state was the fact that in the latter case the Mormons determined to put up a strenuous resistance and not be driven from their property, exercise the rights of American citizens in general by voting, holding office and demanding the operation of constituted legal machinery of the state to settle differences rather than run from their enemies. For interesting material on this subject see heretofore unpublished letters of the anti-Mormon preacher, Pixley, found in the Appendix; also, Roberts, I, 315-66; 413-569; Linn, pp. 166-222. ?

Two days after his arrival, he and the Prophet called the church members together to "celebrate the anniversary of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints." On the 7th and 8th (April 1838) he attended the quarterly conference held in Far West. During the remainder of the month of May he was engaged in a variety of occupations some of which were writing articles for the Elders' Journal, delivering an address at the school house, at which time he "elucidated the policy of both the Federal and Democratic parties," (which "highly edified" the Prophet); he preached a funeral sermon, traveled about the adjoining country selecting the best locations for future settlements, assisted in surveying, building houses; and he was with the Prophet when the "old Nephite Altar or tower" was discovered and also the place which the Prophet said "by the mouth of the Lord it was named "Adam-ondi ahman," because it is the place where Adam shall come to visit his people, or the Ancient of days shall sit, as spoken of by Daniel, the Prophet."

Besides the numerous difficulties which existed between the Mormons and the Missourians there was apostacy and less serious difficulties among the Mormons themselves. There had been considerable complaints by some of the Mormons after the time they were driven from Jackson County. Before Rigdon reached Far West, W. W. Phelps, John Whitmer, Oliver Cowdery, David Whitmer, and Lyman B. Johnson were expelled from the church by a general assembly. Some of the charges were "unchristian-like conduct," "persisting in the use of tea, coffee, and tobacco," "disgracing the church by being connected with the bogus business," "urging vexatious lawsuits against the brethren," etc. These men had been the principal leaders in the West while Rigdon and the Prophet had been at Kirtland. Cowdery had been the chief scribe to the Prophet when the Book of Mormon was written, and the Whitmers had been among the special "witnesses" to the gold plates from which the Prophet claimed to have translated the record.

For a while it looked as if the opposing minority might attempt the same kind of opposition which had been led so successfully by Warren Parrish and Boynton at Kirtland. The Prophet, and especially Rigdon, determined to stamp out apostacy from the western group. Having recently suffered the serious consequences of "a house divided against itself," Rigdon aggressively attacked the dissenters in speech and writing. One of the most crude, if not the most vulgar article that ever appeared in a religious magazine was written by Rigdon denouncing Parrish and the other chief dissenters in Kirtland.¹ He then wrote a long article against the dissenters in Missouri, warning them to cease their trouble-making and get out of the Mormon communities if they were interested in their own safety. This warning to apostates was signed by eighty-four Mormons and addressed to Oliver Cowdery, David Whitmer, John Whitmer, William W. Phelps, and Lyman R. Johnson. The following is a brief outline of its contents:

Greetings:

Whereas the citizens of Caldwell County have borne with the abuse received from you, at different times... having exhausted all the patience they have and conceive that to bear any longer is a vice instead of a virtue:...we will neither bear nor suffer any longer;... neither think, gentlemen, that in so saying we are trifling... for we are not... no threats from you... out of the County you shall go... you shall have three days after you receive this communication to depart with your families... if you do not depart we will use the means in our power to cause you to depart; for go you shall... There is but one decree for you, which is Depart, depart, or else a more fatal calamity shall befall you. After Oliver Cowdery had been taken by a State's warrant for stealing, and the stolen property found concealed 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 there the officers of the law found it... Did you practice the promised reformation? You know you did not... Oliver Cowdery, David Whitmer, and Lyman R. Johnson, united with a gang of counterfeiters, thieves, and black-legs of the deepest dye, to deceive, cheat, and defraud the Saints out of their property, by every art and stratagem

1. I have not been able to locate the Elders' Journal which contained this article. I base my statement from the reprint found in Gragg's The Prophet of Palmyra, pp. 529-37; also, the reference to it in Linn, pp. 155-56; also see Messenger and Advocate, 1837, pp. 436-39.

which wickedness could invent... and actually made attempts with their gang to bring mobs upon (us)... In addition to this you have also stirred up men of weak minds to prosecute one another for the vile purpose of getting a fee for a pettifogger from them... and to crown the whole, you have had the audacity to threaten us, that if we offered to molest you, you would get up a mob from Clay and Ray Counties. For this insult, if nothing else, and your threatening to shoot us, if we offered to disturb you, we will put you from the County of Caldwell--so help us God!¹

The dissenters fled from the country; but like the case of the man who had the evil spirit cast from him, others came to take their place and conditions became worse. Years later Cowdery and Phelps returned to the church; John Whitmer attempted to establish a rival faction on the foundation of the Book of Mormon and part of revelations given by the Prophet. When Judge King began collecting evidence against the Mormon leaders, Phelps signed his name to a most damaging affidavit against Rigdon and the Prophet. A few years later he begged for forgiveness and was re-admitted to the church.

Rigdon seems to have been free from every form of restraint during the summer months (1838). He not only wrote the denunciatory (and disgusting) article in the Elders' Journal and the long warning note of "Greeting" to Cowdery, the Whitmers, Phelps, and Johnson, but in June he delivered his famous sermon from the text, "Ye are the salt of the earth; but if the salt hath lost its savor, wherewithal shall it be salted?"

So far as I have been able to discover this sermon was never written, but both Mormons and anti-Mormons who have referred to it agree that even in a county where practically all were agreed politically and religiously, it was an insane utterance. If the various references to it are reliable, Rigdon seems to have likened the dissenters unto the savorless salt and wildly suggested that they should be stamped out and trodden

1. This article contains four pages of print; I have not been able to check it from a Mormon source, but copy it from Hunt, pp. 204-207. It is referred to by the Mormon historian, Roberts, Comprehensive History of the Church, I, 438. Roberts condemns the article and credits its authorship to Rigdon.

under foot of men. Some of the anti-Mormons have maintained that he told his listeners that the real saints should literally trample on the dissenters until their bowels gushed out; and to clinch the statement he cited the case of Judas, Ananias, and Sapphira. In the case of the last two he is purported to have said that Peter stabbed them and the deacons carried them out and buried them; and in the case of Judas, he did not fall without help, but the apostles threw him headlong, and then trampled out his bowels with their feet. How much of this actually represents the words of Rigdon one cannot say at this late date, for it was first repeated by men who hated him. But this much is certain: "Sidney's Salt Sermon" was inflammatory and threatening. Neither his friends nor his enemies ever forgot the general sentiments which he expressed on that occasion.

A few weeks after he delivered his notorious "Salt Sermon" Rigdon prepared an oration which was delivered in Far West on July 4, 1838. Later the "antis" called this speech the "Mormon Declaration of Independence" and at times it has been referred to as evidence that the Mormons intended to break with the United States. Many writers have confused it with the "Salt Sermon" which had been given the month before, and as I have stated, it was directed against church dissenters. Even Linn (pp. 196-97) and Werner (p. 101) have made this serious blunder. The greater part of the Fourth of July oration is highly patriotic and does not say one word about "trampling out bowels," etc. It was not an extemporaneous address which ran away with the speaker, but it was "carefully prepared... and well understood by the First Presidency" before it was delivered. "Elder Rigdon was the mouthpiece to deliver it, as he was a natural orator, and his delivery was powerful and effective."¹ Although Rigdon was its author, it

1. See Linn, The Story of the Mormons, p. 197; Roberts, Comprehensive History of the Church, I, 443.

was thoroughly approved by the Prophet and was published in the church periodicals and later in pamphlet form.

The Fourth of July audience that heard it thought it was a wonderful speech. When it ended the multitude shouted "hosannah," "hosannah," "hosannah!" The Prophet had invited some leading Missourians from the adjoining counties to be present for the celebration. They occupied seats of honor on the speaker's stand and when the Mormons began to shout their "hosannahs" the visiting Missourians began to shout "hurrah!" and only ceased their shouting when they discovered their spontaneous "hurrahs" did not harmonize with the well-timed "hosannahs" of their Mormon neighbors.

This oration, which is recorded in full in the Appendix, embodied the following ideas which were associated with the central theme expressed in its text: "Better, far better sleep with the dead, than be oppressed among the living."

The American institutions and government are superior "over all the governments of the world, whether they existed in former or later times." The American government is the "only true fabric of freedom and bulwark of our liberty in the world... it is the standard of freedom, both civil and religious." Political and religious differences should be laid aside by all parties whenever the constitution and Union of the country were threatened. Northern, southern, and western interests ought to be forgotten or lost, for the time being, in the more noble desire to preserve the Union;--we cannot, by rending it to pieces." All attempts to unite church and state should be repelled. The American government was divinely instituted and this had been "preparatory to the great purpose which He had designed to accomplish in the last day...in order that the Son of God...should come down from heaven, and reign in Mount Zion." Eight years have passed since God had re-established His church upon the earth and from the very beginning it had suffered persecution. (A long list of persecutions and misfortunes are then listed.) He then describes the temple which the Mormons intend to build in Far West, giving the intended size, cost (\$100,000) and the educational and religious activities which it should serve. "Next to the worship of our God, we esteem the education of our children, and of the rising generation... One part of the house (the temple) shall be set apart for a place of worship, where we shall invoke our God for revelations, when we have gone as far as human skill can carry us, that by revelations, visions, etc., we may fill the vacuum still left, after science and philosophy have done all they can do." Reverting again to the troubles of the Mormons

in times past he concludes: "We have not only, when smitten on one cheek, turned the other, but we have done it again and again, until we are wearied of being smitten, and tired of being trampled upon. We have proved the world with kindness;...we take God and all the holy angels to witness, this day, that we warn all men, in the name of Jesus Christ, to come on us no more forever;--for from this hour, we will bear it no more... and the mob that comes on us to disturb us, it shall be between us and them a war of extermination; for we will follow them till the last drop of their blood is spilled, or else they will have to exterminate us; for we will carry the seat of war to their own houses and their own families, and one party or the other shall be utterly destroyed... We will never be the transgressor--we will infringe on the rights of no people, but shall stand for our own until death." Then enumerating other grievances of the past he closes his long oration with these words, "Neither will we indulge any men, or set of men, in instituting vexatious law-suits against us, to cheat us out of our rights: If they attempt it, we say woe be unto them! We this day, then, proclaim ourselves free, with a purpose and a determination that never can be broken,--no, never! no, never! no, never!!!"¹

Oratory has frequently proven a dangerous weapon to use in times of social unrest and excitement. Calm deliberation was needed in the Missouri situation rather than an inflammatory speech with its accompanying "Hosannahs!" and "Amens!" The Mormon dissenters and the Old Settlers who disliked their Mormon neighbors were threatening Caldwell county. They seized upon the last paragraph of Rigdon's oratory to excite the more peaceful non-Mormon group. On the other hand, the Mormons took the speech to heart and determined to unite against the Old Settlers if they attempted to carry out their threats of repeating the illegal action which had been successfully enacted by the Missourians of Jackson County.

Anti-Mormon writers have always denounced Rigdon's Fourth of July oration. Their statements concerning it have varied from calling its contents "unpolitic" to out-right "treason." In the following paragraph the Mormon historian Roberts well describes the present-day attitude of the Mormons towards it:

The historian more than four score and ten years after these occurrences,...may find it easy to say that the outgiving of this "declaration of independence from mobs" by the saints, and proclaiming a war of

1. See Hunt, Mormonism, pp. 167-80; found in pamphlet form in Chicago Historical Society.

extermination in the event of their being again assailed, was of doubtful propriety, even under all the existing provocation--unwise; impolitic; but it was a very human-like thing to do, albeit more likely to bring about than avert a conflict with the Missourians. Subsequent events proved this to be the effect of it; and certainly the speedy expulsion of the entire body of the church from Missouri, under such circumstances of cruelty and suffering as accompanied the expulsion, affords no ground for belief that there was any divine vindication of the attitude assumed by the saints on that fourth of July day, 1837. (1838).¹

It is the present writer's opinion that the writing and publishing of the speech was a greater mistake than the oral delivery of it. When the oration was given by Rigdon there were few Missourians present, and they did not object to it. The loyal and high-minded sentiments of the oration served as a balance to the extravagant threats against mob agitators. But after the speech was published it seemed that both sides only read the last two paragraphs, forgot that after all it was a "fourth of July" oration and not a declaration of civil war. One finds the few closing paragraphs quoted repeatedly by Mormons and Non-Mormons, but the remainder of that long speech has been read by relatively few persons.

It would require considerable writing to trace the Mormon history in Western Missouri between the months of July (1838) when Rigdon delivered the Mormon "Declaration of Independence from Mobs," down to October 27, when Governor Boggs issued his infamous orders to General John B. Clark, to establish peace no matter if it required him to drive the Mormons from the state or exterminate them. In this paper space will not permit a careful recording of the events. Moreover, the records of the period are contradictory and often woefully incomplete. Men "testified" and then later denied their former statements.

Most of the "official" documents of the State were compiled under the direction of Governor Boggs, who was from Jackson County where the Mormons

1. Roberts, A Comprehensive History of the Church, I, 442-43.

had been expelled in 1833. He was an avowed enemy of the Mormons and no writer has ever been able to justify his ruthless order to General Clark which combined the State Militia with a mob against the Mormons.¹ Judge King, the district Judge who gathered the affidavits showed hostility against the Mormons from the very opening of the various hearings of the case. General Clark clearly revealed his stand on the Mormon situation by the letter he sent to the Governor shortly after the Mormons had surrendered. He suggested "the propriety of trying Joe Smith and those leaders (which included Rigdon) taken by General Lucas, by court martial, for mutiny... They have committed treason, murder, arson, burglary, robbery, larceny, and perjury."

To carefully examine the evidence, fill in the blank spots, determine where the written reports are true and where they are false, and attempt to fix the blame for all the points where outbreaks occurred, would require a volume. It would require but little research in some cases, to prove that some of the affidavits used in this paper are not entirely true, yet even though they were written by men who either disliked Rigdon personally or Mormonism in general, they serve our purpose to this extent: They show that Rigdon was one of the chief storm centers on the Mormon side. Moreover, if there is so much as a grain of truth

1. Mormon histories are replete with evidence to substantiate the above statements. This material was carefully gathered and presented to the United States senate hoping to impeach the State of Missouri. Turner is decidedly "non-Mormon", yet he writes, (p. 57): "Who began the quarrel? Was it the Mormons? Is it not notorious, on the contrary, that they were hunted, like wild beasts from county to county, before they made any desperate resistance? Did they ever, as a body, refuse obedience to the laws, when called upon to do so, until driven to desperation by repeated threats and assaults on the part of the mob? Did the State ever make one decent effort to defend them, as fellow-citizens, in their rights...? Let the conduct of its governors, attorneys, and the fate of their final petitions answer. Have any who plundered and openly massacred the Mormons ever been brought to the punishment due to their crimes? Let the boasting murderers of begging and helpless infancy answer." This book was written in 1842 when the facts of the case were available. Turner was a professor in Illinois College. Elsewhere in his book he shows disgust for Mormonism. His book is not pro-Mormon.

running through the apostates' affidavits, Rigdon made wild utterances after the fight began. He was a dangerous man to be exercising any control in such a situation, and from the records it seems that he was free from any restraint. If the Prophet had any desire to curb Rigdon's extravagant language he was not very successful.

The following outline of the events which led to the Mormon expulsion from the State is part of Rigdon's history for he was either directly or indirectly connected with all the major events on the Mormon side. One month after his Fourth of July oration (Aug. 6, 1838), the Missourians in Gallatin, Daviess County, determined to prevent the Mormons in their district from voting. The Mormons who were assembled were just as determined that they would vote, and when the Missourians discovered that threats and abusive harangues did not frighten their Mormon neighbors away from the polls they resorted to force. Shortly after the row got started the outcome looked bad for the few Mormons until one of their members, John L. Butler, began cracking the Missourians' skulls right and left with a big club. This row lasted but a few minutes, then the non-Mormons started for their guns and the Mormons returned to their homes, collected their families and hid them in a thicket of hazel bush until the following day while they remained on guard.

As an outcome of this local fight, rumors soon spread to the Mormon county of Caldwell that members of the sect had been killed at the election in Gallatin. Likewise stories of Mormon "killings," etc., began to spread rapidly throughout the non-Mormon counties of upper Missouri. In a few days armed bodies of men began collecting in the vicinity of the Mormon settlements outside of Caldwell County. Previous to the outbreak, the Mormons of Caldwell were organized into one regiment of state militia, and when they went to the rescue of their brethren outside the county they considered themselves merely upholding the State peace against mob violence.

In a short time lawless bodies of men began burning houses and stealing property. After it was all over the Mormons accused the Missourians with the burnings and stealings on both sides. They claimed that the Missourians would take their property from their houses, burn them down, flee into the surrounding country and then accuse their Mormon neighbors. They maintained that such acts were done in order to excite the public to such a pitch that the Mormons would have to leave, thus enriching the old settlers with their improved lands, etc. On the other hand the Missourians maintained their innocence of the above crimes, and placed the blame on the Mormons.

Eventually several thousand state militiamen were called out by the Governor. As they approached the Mormon town of Far West they were joined by the local armed bodies of non-Mormons. A truce was called and through the treachery of George M. Hinkle, the Mormon militia leader, the Mormon leaders were betrayed into the hands of the mob-militia. Among these prisoners were Rigdon and the Prophet. Although the Mormons have always denounced Hinkle for his treachery in delivering the Mormon leaders into the hands of General Lucas as "prisoners of war" when they thought they were going into their enemies' camp under a flag of truce for an interview, still it was perhaps for their own good. If there had been any delay in delivering up the leading Mormons there would very likely have been a wholesale massacre of men, women, and children in the town of Far West as had already been enacted in the little settlement of Haun's Mill.¹

1. Haun's Mill was a little Mormon settlement located about ten miles east of Far West. Without any warning they were rushed upon by 240 militia men who fired upon men, women, and children in the peaceful village. Seventeen were killed outright and twelve were severely wounded. The following paragraph illustrates the brutality and savagery of the murderers. "Esq. Thos. McBride was an old soldier of the Revolution. He was lying wounded and helpless, his gun by his side. A militia-man named Rogers came up to him and demanded it. 'Take it,' said McBride. Rogers picked up the weapon, and finding that it was loaded, deliberately discharged it into

Lucas decided to make short work of the Mormon problem after he had their leaders in his power. He called a court martial and they were sentenced to be shot the following morning on the public square of Far West. The order of the court martial was not carried out due to the action taken by Brigadier-General Alexander W. Doniphan. He openly denounced his superior's action as "cold-blooded murder" and threatened to withdraw his troops if the verdict of the court martial was executed. Doniphan's action alarmed Lucas; the order of execution was not carried out. Neither was Doniphan ever brought to trial for his insubordination.

Missouri prison life was none too pleasant but still it was better than execution. From Far West the prisoners were taken to Independence and later they were removed to Richmond where their examination before Judge King lasted seventeen days. At the close of the hearing Rigdon was held with five others on charges of treason against the State, murder, burglary, arson, robbery, and larceny; and they were committed to prison without bail. The following February Rigdon was released.¹

During the hearing before Judge King the following items of testimony were gathered from the anti-Mormons and the apostates. Its real value lies in throwing light upon the activity of Rigdon during the trouble between the Mormons and their neighbors rather than in fixing the blame upon him or upon any of the others whose names appear in the affidavits. Sampson Avard said that

the old man's breast. He then cut and hacked the old veteran's body with a rude sword, or 'corn knife' until it was frightfully mangled. Wm. Reynolds, a Livingston man, killed the little boy, Sardius Smith, 10 years of age. The lad had run into the blacksmith shop and crawled under the bellows for safety... He described, with fiendish glee, how the poor boy struggled in his dying agony, and justified his savage and inhuman conduct in killing a mere child by saying, 'Nits will make lice, and if he had lived he would have become a Mormon.'" (The Mormons claim there was a general pillage, and that in two or three instances the bodies of the slain were robbed..) "One man carried away an empty ten gallon keg... on his saddle and beat it as a drum... Another had a woman's bonnet, which he said was for his sweetheart. Perhaps a dozen horses were taken." See History of Caldwell County, pp. 148-51; Roberts, op. cit., I, 480-83; Church History, III, 183-87.

1. There seems to be some confusion as to the exact date, see Roberts, pp. 521-22; Church History, III, 264; Improvement Era, III, No. 4, 265; from the last mentioned it seems to have been immediately after Feb. 23; Journal of History III, No. 4, 403, states Jan. 30, 1839.

A part of the goods were brought to Far West, under the care of Captain Fearnought. On their arrival, President Rigdon and others shouted hosannas to the victory...About the time the dissenters fled, President Rigdon preached a sermon from the text, "Ye are the salt of the earth; but if the salt hath lost its savor, wherewithal shall it be salted?" commonly called the "salt sermon," in which the dissenters were called the salt which had lost its savor, and they should be trampled upon and driven out by the Saints which was well understood by the Danites as a part of their duty to do.¹

Part of Morris Phelps' affidavit states that,

Rigdon, in speaking of dissenters who were unwilling to fight mobs, said, that they ought to be pitched upon horses with pitchforks and bayonets and forced into the front of the battle, and their property confiscated to the use of the army. (Hunt, p. 212).

John Corrill stated that after Rigdon's Salt Sermon,

There seemed considerable excitement among the people, and the dissenters left, as I advised them they were in danger... I heard him (Rigdon) say he would not suffer people to come into their streets and abuse them, nor would not suffer vexatious law-suits.² (p. 213-15)

George Walter stated that he heard "Huntington and Dr. Avard, and I think Mr. Rigdon, say, that if ever the dissenters returned to Far West their heads should be the forfeit." (p. 219)

The ex-Mormon militia leader, G. M. Henkle testified that,

During the time of the last expedition to Davies, a portion of the troops returned to Far West, and was paraded on the square before Sidney Rigdon's house; Rigdon addressed them in a cheering and encouraging manner in the course they had been pursuing. A letter was sent from Davies, from Joseph Smith, Jun., to Sidney Rigdon, which he had then in his hand, but said there was a profound secret in it. (p. 225)

James C. Owens refers to the above mentioned letter and adds in his affidavit,

I afterwards asked Sidney Rigdon to read it to me, which he did, and it was, as near as I can recollect, as follows:--'That the enemy was delivered into their hands, and that they need not fear; that this had been given to him by the spirit of prophecy, in the name of Jesus Christ.' Sidney Rigdon appeared to rejoice at the information, and give in to it. (p. 226).

Abner Scovel refers to Rigdon's attitude towards apostates who had become "repeaters":

1. Avard turned apostate. The Mormons have always denied that their leaders had anything to do with organizing the "Danites" and accused Avard of its origin.

2. These references are to pages in Hunt's Mormonism, where the material is quoted. It can also be found in U. S. Senate Records.

Soon after the time that Phelps and Williams were baptized... I heard Sidney Rigdon say, in Far West, that if Phelps or Williams apostatized again, or set up against the government or kingdom, the Lord would kill them in half an hour, or would put it into the hearts of his Saints to kill them. I know of no other violent measures except from rumor. (P. 228)

Most of the dissenters refer to Rigdon's "Salt Sermon." Reed Peck adds to the statements which have already been given about it that "Mr. Rigdon said, in the same sermon, that he would assist to erect a gallows on the square and hang them (the dissenters) all." (pp. 233-37).

As I have stated elsewhere in this thesis, W. W. Phelps had been high in the Mormon church affairs in Missouri before Rigdon and the Prophet made Far West their headquarters. His apostasy, excommunication, testimony against the Mormons, and later his re-baptism and fellowship among those whom he had done considerable injury, forms an interesting chapter in Mormon history. He later claimed that most of the following material which was given in his affidavit was false and was given under the pressure of threats and fears. He was particularly hostile against Rigdon because the latter had replaced him as postmaster of Far West. There is little material in the affidavits that are not referred to in this paper which is not mentioned in the foregoing "Depositions" or in what shall follow from Phelps. Among other things he testified that,

As early as April (1838) last at a meeting in Far West, of eight or ten persons, Mr. Rigdon rose and made an address to them, in which he spoke of having borne persecutions, and law suits, and other privations, and did not intend to bear them any longer; that they meant to resist the law; and if a sheriff came after them with writs, they would kill him; and if anybody opposed them they would take off their heads. George W. Harriss, who was present, observed, "You mean the head of their influence, I suppose?" Rigdon answered, 'He meant that lump of flesh and bone called the skull, or scalp.' (Then referring to a period when actual hostilities had begun between the Mormons and the Missourians he continues:)...A motion was then made by Sidney Rigdon, that the blood of those who were thus backward should first be spilt in the streets of Far West. A few said 'Amen' to this, but immediately, Joseph Smith Jun., before Rigdon's motion was put, rose and moved, 'That they be taken out to Davies; and if they came to battle, they should be put on their horses with bayonets and pitchforks, and put in front; this was passed without a dissenting voice. (Referring to an incident when the Prophet was not present he states:) We all marched into the house: A guard was placed around the house, and at the door. Mr. Rigdon then commenced making covenants with uplifted hands: the

first was, that if any man attempted to move out of the county, or pack his things for that purpose, that any man then in the house seeing this, without saying anything to any other person, should kill him, and haul him aside into the brush; and that all the burial he should have should be in a turkey-buzzard's guts,...: This measure was carried in the form of a covenant, with uplifted hands. After the vote had passed, he said, 'Now, see if any one dare vote against it,' and called for the negative vote, and there was none... Mr. Rigdon then observed, that the kingdom of heaven has no secrets; that yesterday a man had slipped his wind, and was dragged into the hazel brush; 'and,' said he, 'the man that lisps it shall die.'... Rigdon observed, that if the inhabitants in the surrounding country commenced burning houses in Caldwell, if they could not get clear of them in any other way, they would poison them off. (P. 250-56) ¹

Fortunately for both the Mormons and their immediate neighbors, all the extravagant threats made by Rigdon were not put into effect. His wild statements injured his own people more than his enemies. The Mormons were not ignorant of this fact, for six years later when he was excommunicated from the church the leading Elders used it as evidence against him during the church trial. On that occasion, Orson Hyde openly declared to hundreds of assembled Mormons who had recently been driven from Missouri: "Now I don't know of any man in this church that has gone deeper into matters than he (Rigdon) did, in Far West, in his oration on the 4th of July. He was the cause of our troubles in Missouri, and although Brother Joseph tried to restrain him, he would take his own course."²

Before closing the account of Rigdon's career in Missouri there remains to be told his three and a half months imprisonment and his temporary insanity which accompanied it. When the mob-militia began gathering around Far West and open warfare began, Rigdon was in a high state of mental excitement. His old friend, Whitney, who had known him before he entered the Mormon Church and who was closely associated with him during his Mormon days, characterized him as being "always either in the bottom of the cellar or up in the garret window." Just before his delivery into

1. See in the Appendix the statement made by John D. Lee concerning an incident in Rigdon's life during the "Mormon War."

2. The Improvement Era, III, No. 8, 583.

the hands of General Lucas he was surely "in the garret window." The reaction to his rather prolonged state of mental and emotional excitement came quickly. Two days in Lucas' camp threw him violently "into the cellar."

When the prisoners were placed in the wagon (Nov. 2, 1838) preparatory to their departure for Independence, Rigdon was completely "out of his head." Other factors enter the case besides the natural rebound from the high plane of excitement on which he had been living. The shock of the betrayal by Hinkle, and the physical suffering resulting from a night in his enemies' camp exposed to inclement weather were contributing factors to his derangement. Moreover, he was forced to listen to boasting guards relate their conquests in the Mormon town after the men had been disarmed. Their vicious stories of plunder and ravishment were not mistaken for idle tales by the Mormon prisoners; for they were acquainted with the brutalities and murders perpetrated at Haun's Hill the day before Hinkle betrayed them to Lucas.¹

Added to the foregoing elements was the fear for his personal safety. The hasty Court Martial had sentenced him to be shot with the other leading prisoners. From the meager accounts of that period it appears doubtful that Rigdon was sane during the first period of his imprisonment. Lyman Wright, one of his fellow prisoners, later wrote that "when the brethren were taken before the militia-mob...Sidney Rigdon, who was of a delicate constitution, received a slight shock of apoplectic fits, which excited great laughter and much ridicule in the guard and mob-militia."²

1. A few years later Rigdon referred to his state of body and mind at the time of his imprisonment. He said "Being taken sick at the early state of the trial, I had not the opportunity of hearing but a small part of the testimony when it was delivered." He also declared that the part which he did hear "did not contain one single point but was misrepresented; each witness swore falsely." He also testified in court that during his imprisonment he became acquainted with a plot in which the Missourian participants intended to ravish Mrs. Joseph Smith, his wife, and daughter. He prevented the crime by secretly sending a message of warning to the women. See Times and Seasons, IV, 269-78.

2. The Improvement Era, III, No. 4, 265-66.

As I have already outlined the events, Rigdon and his fellow prisoners were taken from Far West to Independence where the curious public was given an exhibition of the Mormon leaders, and after a few days they were taken to Richmond under heavy guard. At this place a hearing was granted. Most of the prisoners by now were released, but Rigdon, the Prophet, and several others were sent to Liberty for imprisonment until the State saw fit to try them for "treason, murder, burglary, arson, robbery and larceny." Pratt, another fellow prisoner at that time, later recorded their experiences and incidentally tells the reader of Rigdon's condition:

It was a very severe time of snow and winter weather, and we suffered much. During this time Elder Rigdon was taken very sick, from hardship and exposure, and finally lost his reason; but still he was kept in a miserable, noisy, and cold room, and compelled to sleep on the floor with a chain and padlocked round his ankle, and fastened to six others. Here he endured the constant noise and confusion of an unruly guard... they recounted for hours obscene jests, the horrid oaths, and dreadful blasphemies... (they told)... to each other their deeds of rapine, murder, robbery, etc.... among the Mormons while at Far West and vicinity. They even boasted of defiling by force wives, daughters and virgins, and of shooting or dashing out the brains of men, women and children... While he lay in this situation his son-in-law, George W. Robinson, the only male member of his family, was chained by his side. Thus Mrs. Rigdon and her daughters were left entirely destitute and unprotected... Mrs. Robinson with her little infant, came down to see her husband, and to comfort and take care of her father in his sickness. When she first entered the room, amid the clank of chains and the rattle of weapons, and cast her eyes on her sick and dejected parent... she was speechless... This faithful lady, with her little infant, continued by the side of her father till he recovered from his sickness, and till his fevered and disordered mind resumed its wonted powers.¹

Just how much time passed before Rigdon's "fevered and disordered mind resumed its wonted powers" the various records of that period do not inform the reader.

When he was released on bail the following February it must have been a relief to the other prisoners, for at his best he was sick both physically and mentally, but at no time did he bear his sufferings heroically. He repeatedly shocked his companions by saying "that the

1. Autobiography of Parley P. Pratt, pp. 228-29.

sufferings of Jesus Christ were a fool to his."

None of the Mormon prisoners were executed. Some of them escaped and others were released on bail. They were an embarrassment to the State officials. Public opinion in Northwestern Missouri was decidedly against them, yet to have legally and orderly proceeded against the Mormon leaders would have involved many native Missourians in the very crimes which were charged against the Mormons. Moreover, various newspapers began to criticize the action taken by the Governor and his Generals.

If the State prosecutors had been in earnest, they would never have permitted Rigdon to be released on bail. He was recognized as the second highest official in the church. No man in the Mormon group had been as determined to "fight it out" as he. Yet Rigdon was released on bail while less important Mormon prisoners remained in Missouri jails for several more months. His own account of his release fittingly closes his experiences in Missouri, and it also reveals the precaution which was necessary for his safety from the hostile inhabitants of the county even though he was freed by "due process of law."

The trial lasted for a long time, the result of which I was ordered to be discharged from prison and the rest remanded back but I was told by those who professed to be my friends that it would not do for me to go out of jail at that time, as the mob were watching and would most certainly take my life... It was some ten days after this before I dared leave the jail... My wife came to the jail to accompany me... Just at dark the sheriff and jailer came to the jail with our supper... I whispered to the jailer to blow out all the candles but one, and step away from the door with that one... The sheriff then took me by the arm and an apparent scuffle ensued, so much so that those who were watching did not know who it was the sheriff was scuffling with. The sheriff kept pushing me towards the door, and I apparently resisting until we reached the door, which was quickly opened and we both reached the street. He took me by the hand and bade me farewell... After I had gone probably one hundred rods, I heard some person coming after me in haste. The thought struck me in a moment that the mob was after me. I drew a pistol and cocked it, determined not to be taken alive... When the person... spoke I knew his voice, and he speedily came to me... After I had gone about three miles, my wife overtook me in a carriage, into which I got, and we rode all night. It was an open carriage, and in the month of February, 1839,... From thence I made my way to Illinois, where I now am. My wife after I left her went directly to Far West and got the family under way, and all unexpectedly met me at Tenny's Grove.¹

1. Journal of History, III, No. 4, 403-404.

CHAPTER VI

SIDNEY RIGDON---THE POSTMASTER

(NAUVOO PERIOD, 1839-1844)

After Rigdon, the "Prophet", and the other leading Mormons were betrayed into the hands of General Lucas, the Mormons were forced to submit to the following terms:

- 1) To give up their leaders to be tried and punished.
- 2) To make an appropriation of their property, all who have taken up arms, to the payment of their debts and indemnity for damage done by them.
- 3) That the balance should leave the State, and be protected out by the militia, but be permitted to remain under protection until further orders were received by the commander-in-chief.
- 4) To give up the arms of every description, to be receipted for.¹

General Lucas felt that he was not going beyond the bounds of public sentiment or official authority. That section of the country was already armed against the Mormons, and the Governor of the State had sent written instructions to either "drive them from the State or exterminate them."

Deprived of their weapons, separated from their leaders and surrounded by hostile and desperate men, there was but one course for the Mormons to follow--namely, leave the State en masse. They were already on the outskirts of western civilization so they turned eastward. On April 20, 1838, the last of the Mormons left Far West, and by the end of the month but few were to be found anywhere within the State of Missouri. Most of them were either scattered through the southeastern part of Iowa or concentrated within the vicinity of Quincy, Illinois.

Between twelve and fifteen thousand Mormons were driven from

1. See Linn, The Story of the Mormons, p. 208; Church History, III, 197.

the State of Missouri. P. P. Pratt estimated the loss of life "between three and four hundred." General Clark reported that "about forty"¹ had been killed, and "several wounded." Pratt's estimate is doubtless too high even if it is intended to include all the aged and sick who are hastened to their graves from insufficient feed and improper shelter. On the other hand, Clark's estimate is far too low. Besides the loss of life referred to above, the Mormons claimed a property loss of \$2,000,000 not counting the \$50,000 spent by the Prophet for lawyer's fees--"from which he derived little help."

When Rigdon was released, after his imprisonment of three and one-half months, he used all the haste and precaution at his command in leaving the state. When he arrived in Quincy, in February, he found a large number of Mormon refugees had already gathered there from Western Missouri under the capable leadership of Brigham Young. The people of Illinois were very sympathetic toward those strange religionists who flocked to their State in the early spring of 1839.

Several factors were conducive to the Mormons' being welcomed into Illinois. Their poverty and temporary sufferings aroused humanitarian impulses among the better citizens. Local societies volunteered aid; clothing, food, and shelter were provided in many instances. Another factor, to the Mormons' advantage, was the general animosity which existed between Illinois and Missouri at that period. About this time, also, the newspapers throughout the country condemned the high-handed tactics employed by Governor Boggs and his followers. However, one does not have to proceed far with one's investigation of the situation to discover that the political and economic conditions of the State of Illinois largely account for the genuine welcome extended to the Mormon refugees.

1. See Linn, op. cit., p. 210.

The State was over-burdened with taxes, and decidedly under-populated. Repeated bank failures had become a common occurrence in various sections of the State. Thomas ^{Ford?} York, who was elected Governor in 1842, was well acquainted with the true situation which he wrote in his History of Illinois. This book was written between his retirement from office in 1844 and his death in 1850. A few sentences from his book help to explain why the Mormons were so welcome:

No further attempt was made after July, 1841, to pay interest on the public debt. For want of full knowledge of her condition abroad, and of the condition of other new States, in a short time Illinois... became a stench in the nostrils of the civilized world. The people at home began to wake up in terror; the people abroad who wished to settle in a new country, avoided Illinois as they would pestilence and famine... The terrors of high taxation were before all eyes, both at home and abroad. Every one at home wanted to sell his property and move away, and but few, either at home, or abroad, wanted to purchase. The impossibility of selling, kept us from losing population; and the fear of disgrace or high taxes, prevented us from gaining materially... When I came into office in 1842 I estimated that the good money in the State in the hands of the people, did not exceed one year's interest on the public debt.¹

Twelve thousand immigrants with an excellent record for thrift and industry were welcome to such an environment even though they were temporarily poverty-ridden. It required little far-sightedness to see that within a short time they would carry their share of the heavy burden of taxes and control the ballot wherever they resided. It is ^a significant fact that the local Democratic Committee of Quincy was very active in supplying food, clothing, and shelter to the new comers. The Whigs were also active, and through their press they reminded the Mormons that they had been driven from Missouri under the direction of a Democratic Governor.

Upon Rigdon's arrival in Illinois, he became very active in behalf of his church. In spite of his ill health and poverty he was able to visit and communicate with Governors and leading statesmen in various sections of the country. He believed that the State of Missouri could be impeached

1. Gov. Thomas Ford, History of Illinois, pp. 222, 223.

on the ground that she had abdicated republican government. Rigdon thought that by appealing to the various governors and state legislatures of the Union, pressure could be brought to bear upon the Federal Government, forcing it to punish the State of Missouri for driving American citizens from their borders.

His efforts for relief in this direction were not without encouragement. He was invited to speak before political assemblies in Quincy, and after his rehearsal of Mormon troubles the local committee renewed their measures of relief; citizens from distant sections of the state also contributed.

The Prophet seemed to doubt Rigdon's loyalty or his willingness to help him for about this time he wrote from his prison in Missouri: "We feel to inquire after Elder Rigdon: If he has not forgotten us, it has not been signified to us by his writing."¹ A few weeks later Rigdon wrote the following to the Prophet, which may have been reassuring:

In the midst of a crowd of business, I haste to send a few lines... We wish you to know that our friendship is unabating, and our exertions for your delivery, and that of the church, unceasing. For this purpose we have labored to secure the friendship of the Governor of the State, with all the principal men in this place. In this we have succeeded beyond our highest anticipations. Governor Carlin assured us last evening, that he would lay our plea before the Legislature of this State, and have the action of that body upon it; and he would use all his influence to have an action which should be favorable to our people. He is also getting papers prepared, signed by all the noted men in this part of the country, to give us a favorable reception at Washington, whither we shall repair forthwith, after having visited the Governor of Iowa, of whose friendship we have the strongest testimonies... Our plan of operation is to impeach the State of Missouri on an item of the Constitution of the United States; that the general government shall give to each state a Republican form of government... Governor Carlin and his lady enter with all the enthusiasm of their natures into this work, having no doubt but that we can accomplish this object. Our plan of operation in this work is to get all the governors, in their next messages, to have the subject brought before the legislatures; and we will have a man at the capital of each state to furnish them with the testimony on the subject; and we design to be at Washington to wait upon Congress, and have the action of that body on it also; all this going on at the same time, and have the action of the whole during one session...²

On the same date that Rigdon wrote the above letter (April 10, 1839), Alnson Ripley also wrote to the Prophet that

1. History of the Church, III, 298.

2. Ibid, pp. 310-11; also, Improvement Era, III, 266.

President Rigdon is wielding a mighty shaft against the whole host of foul calumniators and mobocrats of Missouri. Yesterday he spent a part of the day with Governor Carlin of this State... He (Carlin) also solicited our people, one and all, to settle in this state, and if there could be a tract of country that would suit our convenience, he would use his influence for Congress to make a grant of it to us, to redress our wrongs, and make up our losses.¹

Various attempts were made both in Iowa and in Illinois to sell large tracts of land to the Mormons. However, little was done along these lines until Joseph Smith and his companions escaped from Missouri. This took place three months after Rigdon's release.² Within a few days after his arrival in Illinois, the Prophet made arrangements for the permanent settlement of his followers. He had no desire to move further East. On May 1, 1839, he purchased two large farms from Hugh White and Isaac Galland at Commerce, Illinois. On June 24, (1839) the Church purchased the town of Nashville, in Lee County, Iowa, and twenty thousand acres of land adjoining it. About this time another large tract was purchased opposite Commerce, Illinois--on the Iowa side of the river, west of Montrose. Little money exchanged hands when the Mormons took over these large tracts of land. Some of it was obtained for two dollars per acre with long periods of time allowed to meet the payments on the notes.³ In some cases these notes were non-interest bearing. Rigdon, the Prophet, and Hyrum Smith were the chief agents of the church in these various transactions.

Whenever conditions appeared least encouraging, the Prophet usually renewed the missionary activities of his Elders. He was not out of prison three

1. History of the Church, III, 312; also, Improvement Era, III, 267.

2. Hyrum Smith gives the following account of their "escape": (Ibid. p. 321). "We bought a jug of whisky, with which we treated the company (their guards), and while there the sheriff showed us the mittimus before referred to, without date or signature... said he, I shall take a good drink of grog, and go to bed, and you may do as you have a mind to... Two of us mounted the horses...and we took our change of venue for the State of Illinois; (Their own guards sold horses to them.)"

3. Linn (p. 224) writes: "Hotchkiss accepted for his land two notes signed by Smith and his brother, Hyrum, and Rigdon, one payable in ten, and the other in twenty years. Galland took notes and, sometime later... the Mormons' lands in Missouri, 'in payment for the whole amount... to the amount of \$80,000.'" Also, see Times and Seasons, II, 275.

weeks before he sent several of his strongest helpers to England. All of these missionaries were poor, and most of them left their families scattered along the Mississippi River banks, hardly knowing where their next meal would come from. Missionaries were sent also to the Pacific Islands, while others continued to proselyte throughout America and Canada. For several months after the Mormons were driven from Missouri the press in various sections of the country continued to express sympathy for the outcasts. Thus the Mormon Elder found people ready to listen to his Missouri experiences even though they were not interested in Mormonism as a religion.

The Prophet had faith in Rigdon's scheme to "Impeach the State of Missouri on an item of the Constitution of the United States, that the general government shall give to each State a republican form of government." On May 4-5, (1839) a conference was held on the Presbyterian camp ground near Quincy, Illinois. At that time it was decided "to send Sidney Rigdon as a delegate to Washington, D. C., to lay the grievances of the Saints before the General Government." Rigdon was already armed with a letter from Governor Lucas of Iowa which cordially introduced "Dr. Sidney Rigdon" to the Governor Shannon of Ohio and to President Martin Van Buren. Later he was supplied with another letter of recommendation to the President of the United States, which was signed by Governor Carlin of Illinois, United States Senator Young, County Clerk Wren, and by leading business men of Quincy. These men described "the Reverend Sidney Rigdon" as "a man of piety and a valuable citizen."¹

Spurred on by the confidence which was expressed by fellow Mormons, and by the sympathy of influential non-Mormons in various sections of the country, Rigdon made considerable demonstrations of preparing for a trip to Washington where he was expected to bring about the punishment of Missouri.

1. See Linn, The Story of the Mormons, p. 221; also, Journal of History, III, No. 4, 401-08.

He wrote letters to men of recognized political importance and leadership, and frequently he received answers. Land salesmen and hopeful politicians continued to call at his residence, and thus weeks passed into months and still Missouri remained unpunished. And when he was urged to depart, he protested ill health. At last (October 29th, 1839) he was prevailed upon to begin the journey. He was accompanied by Dr. Foster, who was supposed to keep him in good health, the Prophet, Judge Higbee, and O. P. Rockwell. The latter was an expert marksman and usually served the Prophet as his personal bodyguard.

Rigdon and his associates went by way of Springfield where they received further information and advice from State officials concerning the most effective procedure to follow in Washington. After this short delay they started due east for the National Capital. Rigdon was apparently quite sick, and the poor roads made it impossible for him to regain his health while en route. The appointed day for their hearing drew near and they were still far from Washington, so the Prophet and Judge Higbee hurried on to their destination leaving the others in Pennsylvania.¹

The Mormon mission to Washington was a failure. Doubtless it would not have been a great success no matter who had pled the Mormon cause before the Federal leaders. But perhaps Rigdon would have impressed his listeners more favorably than the Mormon Prophet did. In past years he had enjoyed the intimate association of such men as the two Campbells, and in recent months he had interviewed the leading politicians of the West. Through experience and education, and the general advantages which come with age and maturity, he would have made a better delegate than Joseph Smith. The very fact that the latter claimed to be a Prophet and divinely inspired man would have prejudiced such men as Van Buren, Calhoun, and Clay. The Prophet has recorded that he was treated "insolently" by the national leaders and that "On my way home I did

1. Rigdon may have gone on to Washington before he returned to Nauvoo. The records are a bit confusing. See Reorganized L.D.S. Church History, II, 402.

not fail to proclaim the iniquity and insolence of Martin Van Buren towards myself and injured people which will have its effect upon the public mind."

From various hints which appear in the Prophet's journal, it appears that he always condemned Rigdon for not going to Washington immediately after his appointment. And from this period onward Rigdon and the Prophet began to drift apart. He continues to be called "President Rigdon," the first Counselor to the Prophet Joseph; and from careless reading of the records one might think that he was even gaining in leadership, for in the Times and Seasons (June 1, 1841) there appears the announcement that "Sidney Rigdon has been ordained a Prophet, Seer, and Revelator." There was little left, after the above announcement, that could be added to his official church titles. However, the events which follow show that the greater part of his titles were quite empty of recognized leadership and influence. Rigdon had comparatively little to do with the building of the new city at Commerce. He was crowded out of the Prophet's confidence by Hyrum Smith and the young Apostles who were sending converts by the hundreds from England.

Events move swiftly in Mormon history between the escape of the Prophet from Missouri and the date of his murder in Illinois (April 16, 1839--June 27, 1844). In May (1839) the Mormons made their first purchase of land at the village of "Commerce", Illinois. The following month a Mormon by the name of Theodore Turley built a house at that location. On April 21, 1840, the name "Commerce" was changed to "Nauvoo," the Prophet claiming that the latter was a Hebrew word signifying "The Beautiful." In spite of the malaria and cholera which attacked the new settlers, Nauvoo had a population of approximately 15,000 at the time of the Prophet's death. At that time a temple was almost finished which was valued at \$1,000,000, and various industries were being rapidly developed in the city.

Nauvoo, which the Mormon historian calls "a city-state" and which the

Governor of the State called "a government within a government" could boast of the most amazingly liberal charter ever granted to a city within the United States. It had the right to enact any law not in conflict with those of the State or of the United States; and a writ of habeas corpus might be issued in all cases arising under city ordinance. The Mormons were also granted charters for the founding of "Nauvoo University,"¹ and the "Nauvoo Legion."²

In less than three years the Mormons became a power of importance in their section of Illinois. They completely controlled the political situation in Hancock County, and in adjoining districts the party which could win their support usually elected their candidates. The Mormons did not follow party lines, but shifted their party allegiance from time to time according to the pre-election promises of the candidates. Thus, regardless who won in the elections, the Mormons were certain to have strong enemies; for every defeated candidate looked upon them as his enemy. In the presidential election of 1844, the Mormons were dissatisfied with all the presidential timber, so they advertised their protest by nominating Joseph Smith for president and Sidney Rigdon for vice-president.³ Before the election occurred, however, Joseph Smith was murdered and Sidney Rigdon was excommunicated from the Mormon Church.

During the Nauvoo period Rigdon was elected to the first City Council; later he became Postmaster; there is some evidence that he practiced law;⁴ and

1. Rigdon was given title of "Professor of Church History."

2. All the male members between the ages of 16 and 40 were enrolled. Joseph Smith was Lieutenant General.

3. It appears that the Prophet accepted Rigdon as a running mate for office after more desirable men failed him. At first he hoped that J. H. Bennet of New York would run, and then Col. Solomon Copeland of Tenn. was invited to accept the honor. History of the Church, VI, 244, 248.

4. I cannot find where Rigdon was admitted to the State bar. He and the Prophet began the study of law under their attorney, Atchison, during the Missouri troubles. The records (Ibid., p. 357) show that he and a Mr. Styles were counsel for Joseph Smith at Nauvoo. In the Times and Seasons, II, 374 there is a legal notice to which the following is appended: "Sidney Rigdon, Attorney for Ruggles & Chase." In spite of this he may not have been a member of the State Bar.

he was given the position of "Professor of Church History" in the University of Nauvoo. On special occasions he was chosen to give orations, but the records do not show that he was an intimate counselor and friend to the Prophet. In fact the Prophet tried repeatedly to rid himself of Rigdon after the latter failed to plead the Mormon cause at Washington.

At the conference of the Church held in Nauvoo, October 27, 1843, the Prophet rejected Rigdon as a Counselor, complaining that he had not been of any aid to him since the Missouri troubles. He accused Rigdon with the detention of valuable mail which was meant for himself, and complained of Rigdon's methods of operating the Post office. At that time he also accused him of "leaguering with dishonest persons in endeavoring to defraud the innocent, and corresponding with his enemies--John C. Bennett¹ and ex-Governor Carlin.

But Rigdon was still a man to be reckoned with. He determined to hold his official position in name whether he held any power in fact or not. The next day he humbly denied the public charges made against his honesty and loyalty. He advanced a sick man's plea for his general inactivity during the past four years; he reminded the people of his circumstances when he fled from Missouri, and "He closed with a moving appeal to President Joseph Smith, concern-

1. John C. Bennett was an important person in Mormon history yet he was associated with them but a short time. Bancroft has well described in the following sentences the man and his activities: "He is a yankee huckster of the first class, only for his merchandise, instead of patent clocks and wooden nutmegs, he offers for sale theology, medicine, and a general assortment of political and military wares. The thing is a fraud, and before long he openly announces himself as such. As his manhood is far inferior to his duplicity, so his name --the Reverend General John C. Bennett, M.D., U.S.A., president, chancellor, and master in chancery--as we may observe, is subordinate to his titles. He has ability, he has brains and fingers; but he has no soul. He comes to Joseph and says, 'Hail, master.' and worships him. He professes all that the Mormons profess, and more; he does all that the Mormons do, and more. So the Prophet makes him general of his legion, mayor of the city, chancellor of the university, not to mention his functions as attorney, doctor, and privy counsellor. All this is done with quick despatch; and the result is that the great man soon tires of his greatness, or thinks to become yet great by turning renegade, and writing a book against his late friends and associates." History of Utah, pp. 149-50.

ing their former friendship, associations, and sufferings; and expressed his willingness to resign his place, though with sorrowful and indescribable feelings." The conference reporter adds: "During this address, the sympathies of the congregation were highly excited."¹ Almon Babbit, William Law, and Hyrum Smith, the Prophet's brother and most trusted counselor, spoke in defense of Rigdon; and their statements coupled with Rigdon's oratory moved the people to sustain him in his position in direct opposition to the Prophet's wishes. The Prophet outwardly conceded to the demands of his followers, but he is reported to have said to his friends: "I have thrown him off my shoulders, and you have put him on me; you may carry him, but I will not." This figure of speech may have meant more to its author than to any one else, for in 1837 he carried Rigdon on his back through some swamps at a time when a mob was after them. In his prime, he (Rigdon) weighed about two hundred pounds; on more than one occasion the Prophet found him to be a heavy burden both figuratively and literally.²

After this critical storm had passed, Rigdon became active again for a few months. The records show that he debated with a Millerite in January (1844), and in the same month he wrote a lengthy appeal to the legislature of his native state, Pennsylvania, calling their attention to Missouri's treatment

1. Improvement Era, III, No. 5, 358, and Times and Seasons, IV, 330.

2. Improvement Era, III, No. 2, 106. It is doubtful that a deep feeling of intimate comradeship ever existed between Sidney Rigdon and Joseph Smith. The Prophet was active and enjoyed to wrestle and compete with his Elders. Rigdon oftentimes carried an air of assumed dignity or melancholy with him. At an early period after their first meeting (Nov. 19, 1833), the Prophet wrote the following in his journal: "I have learned in my travels that man is treacherous and selfish, but few excepted. Brother Sidney is a man whom I love, but is not capable of that pure and steadfast love for those who are his benefactors, as should possess the breast of a president of the Church of Christ ... He is a man whom God will uphold, if he will continue faithful to his calling. O God, grant that he may, for the Lord's sake. Amen... And again, blessed be Brother Sidney, also, notwithstanding he shall be high and lifted up, yet he shall bow down under the yoke like unto an ass that croucheth beneath his burthen, that learneth his master's will by the stroke of the rod: thus saith the Lord..."

of the Mormons. This was the last article of importance that he wrote for the Mormon Church and although it stressed the sensational aspects of the Mormon history in Missouri it is one of the best papers that has been written on the subject from the Mormon point of view. And, so far as the writer has been able to identify Rigdon's contributions to Mormon literature, it appears to be one of the best articles he ever wrote. In his attempt to regain his former prestige he appeared at the April Conference (1844) and began his sermon as follows:

It is with no ordinary degree of satisfaction I enjoy this privilege this morning. Want of health and other circumstances have kept me in silence for nearly the last five years. It can hardly be expected that when the violence of sickness has used its influence, and the seeds of disease have so long preyed upon me, that I can rise before this congregation, only in weakness. I now come forth from a bed of sickness, and have enough of strength left to appear here for the first time in my true character. I have not come before a conference for the last five years in my true character. I shall consider this important privilege sacred in my family history during life.¹

He also testified that the Mormon Church was true and that he had "gazed in visions on the glory of God in days gone by." Other speakers who followed him referred to him as our "venerable patriarch" or "our aged companion" yet he was only fifty-one years old and had thirty-two years longer to live.

Two months later (June 1844) mobs began to collect in the vicinity of Nauvoo. It looked as though the Mormons would have to use their well-trained legion for purposes other than parading. In the face of the approaching storm Rigdon decided to return to Pittsburg with his family and build up the Church in that center and the Prophet seemed glad to have him go. Three years before, Rigdon had desired to leave Nauvoo and return to Pittsburg. On that occasion the Prophet had a revelation which said in part:

1. Improvement Era, III, No. 6, 459.

And again, verily I say unto you, if my servant Sidney will serve me, and be counselor unto my servant Joseph... I, the Lord, will heal him... and he shall be a spokesman before my face. Let him come and locate his family in the neighborhood in which my servant Joseph resides... let him assist my servant Joseph... Behold, it is not my will that he shall seek to find safety and refuge out of the city which I have appointed unto you, even the city of Nauvoo...¹

In 1841 the Prophet did not want Rigdon to depart for Pittsburg, but in June of 1844 he did not attempt to prevent him. Later his friends reported that he said upon Rigdon's departure: "Poor Rigdon, I am glad he is gone to Pittsburg out of the way; were he to preside he would lead the Church to destruction in less than five years."² Many factors contributed to the estrangement of the two Mormon leaders during this short interval of time. The letters and the reported conversations of the Prophet show that he distrusted Rigdon much of the time during his last three years. The following items operated to Rigdon's disadvantage: His sickness which resulted from his Missouri imprisonment; the success of the younger men in bringing converts to Nauvoo tended to cast his work into the shadows; many blamed him for much of the Missouri troubles; and jealousies arose over his appointment to the office of Postmaster. Moreover, although the records are not explicit on the subject, the writer believes that Rigdon and the Prophet never did agree on the question of polygamy. Some authors in their attempt to prove that Rigdon was the real founder of Mormonism and the author of its revelations, have maintained that he originated the "spiritual wifeism" spoken of by anti-Mormons, or the "plurality of wives" and "celestial marriage" mentioned by the Mormons.

Long before the Nauvoo period, the Mormons were accused of practicing polygamy, but they always denied the charges. However, during the last few years of the Prophet's life he secretly married many women and instructed his

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1. Doctrine and Covenants, Sec. 124: 103-110.
 2. History of the Church, VI, 592-93.

leading men to do likewise.¹ There has never been any evidence produced that Rigdon ever accepted this teaching of Joseph Smith as being divine. He later denounced it and claimed that its introduction was the chief cause of the Prophet's death.

Many years later his son, John Rigdon, who was fourteen years of age at the time of his father's removal from Nauvoo, testified that the Prophet once attempted to marry his sister, Nancy; but she rejected his proposal because he already had a wife. Part of John Rigdon's testimony follows:

Joseph, the Prophet, at the city of Nauvoo, Illinois, sometime in the latter part of the year 1843, or the first part of the year 1844, made a proposition to my sister, Nancy Rigdon, to become his wife. It happened in this way... Nancy flatly refused him, saying if she ever got married she would marry a single man or none at all, and thereupon took her bonnett and went home, leaving Joseph at the old lady's house. Nancy told father and mother of it. The story got out and it became the talk of the town that she refused him. A few days after the occurrence, Joseph Smith came to my father's house and talked the matter over with the family, my sister, Mrs. Athalie Robinson also being present, who is still alive. The feelings manifested by our family on this occasion were anything but brotherly or sisterly, more especially on the part of Nancy, as she felt that she had been insulted. A day or two later Joseph Smith returned to my father's house, when matters were satisfactorily adjusted between them, and there the matter ended.²

Nancy Rigdon's attitude towards polygamy was very likely the reflection of her father's private teaching on the subject. Rigdon had gone too far with the Prophet to break openly with him even on a question so serious. One by one the "twelve apostles," Hyrum Smith, and other leading Elders, married several wives apiece; but Rigdon did not follow his official head in this respect. Disagreement over a question which is generally considered as being fundamental and vital to the morals and stability of society could not be

1. The Re-organized Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints claims to be the true followers of Joseph Smith. They have always stoutly denied that he ever practiced polygamy. However, there is too much evidence against this stand to discuss it in this paper. See Shook, True Origin of Mormon Polygamy.

2. Shook, The True Origin of Mormon Polygamy, p. 70. I think that the Prophet must have proposed marriage to Nancy Rigdon before the date given above by her brother. At the church conference in Sept. 1842, Rigdon related a miracle which happened at the death of his young daughter, Elizabeth, a short time before. The doctors declared the child dead; afterwards she returned to life and told her sister, Nancy, "It is in your heart to deny this work, and if you do, the Lord says it will be the damnation of your soul." After delivering the message the child made her "final departure." Times and Seasons III

"satisfactorily adjusted" within a few days. In such a situation one party or the other must whole-heartedly accept the views of the other if unity is to continue; there can be no compromise. It would have been impossible for the Prophet to take Rigdon's stand even though he had had a desire to do so; for he already had several wives whom he had married secretly. On the other hand Rigdon apparently refused to accept as divine revelation, Joseph Smith's teaching on polygamy.

Thus nine days before Joseph Smith was murdered at Carthage, Illinois, he and Sidney Rigdon separated. From outward appearances they were still intimate associates, and Rigdon was merely going to Pittsburg to direct Mormon affairs in that section of the country. But one cannot help believing that if the Prophet's life had been spared, Rigdon would have definitely broken with him after he became firmly established in Pittsburg. For fourteen years these two men had been closely allied in the establishment of a new religious system. Through their leadership thousands of people were influenced to their ways of thinking and living. In a minor way they had affected the history of at least two states in the Union, and one hesitates to forecast the ultimate results of the movement which they helped to create and start on its way.

At the time of their separation serious storm clouds were gathering around Nauvoo. The Prophet began selecting scouts to go west to "California" and "The Oregon Country" to search out a place where the Mormons might build a city to suit their own fancy, pass laws to their own liking, and worship in their own peculiar way. As the storm gathered, Joseph Smith hesitated as to which course to take. If he fled to the unsettled districts of Wisconsin or to the great west, he knew that his people would follow him. He crossed the Mississippi with a few tried friends, but a letter from his wife (Emma) accusing him of fleeing from his people in time of danger caused him to return and face his enemies for the last time.

The day before the Prophet and his brother, Hyrum, were killed (June 27, 1844) Sidney Rigdon arrived in Pittsburg. Brigham Young and several other leading Elders were performing missionary work in the Eastern States and in England. When the news spread that the Mormon Prophet and his brother were murdered by some of their non-Mormon neighbors, most of the leading Elders hastened to Nauvoo. Several became aggressive contenders for the Church leadership; all were anxious to have the question of succession settled at once. Among them Rigdon had claims and ambitions which had to be reckoned with.

CHAPTER VII

SIDNEY RIGDON--MORMON EXCOMMUNICANT

Some have attributed Joseph Smith's success, in part, to his practice of keeping his most aggressive and capable men away from his headquarters. Brigham Young, P. P. Pratt, O. Hyde, H. C. Kimball and men of like energies and abilities were sent on missions repeatedly. His most capable men had been ordained "apostles" whose chief duty was to "Bear witness of the truth to the nations of the earth." However, when they were home they had access to his presence; he was no recluse. It must not be forgotten that Joseph Smith was more than a Prophet to his followers; at the time of his death he was Lieutenant General of the Nauvoo Legion, Mayor of the city, and candidate for the presidency of the United States. There was little of importance in Nauvoo which did not operate under his direction or approval. When his missionaries were at home they always found him accessible. He not only instructed them how to preach, but found time to demonstrate his prowess and strength as a wrestler.

Unlike the "Twelve," Rigdon was always near at hand. He was the Prophet's "spokesman." His relationship to the Prophet was to be like that of Aaron to Moses. There was nothing unusual in the fact that most of the leading Elders were far from Nauvoo when the Prophet was killed. Rigdon's absence was the only irregularity in the situation and that has been already accounted for.

Upon receiving word of the Prophet's death, the scattered Elders directed their courses homeward to "Nauvoo, the beautiful"--the largest city in Illinois. Rigdon arrived on August 3 (1844) and up to that date most of the "Twelve," including Brigham Young, had not returned. As soon

as it was known that the Prophet's "spokesman" had returned from Pittsburgh, P. P. Pratt and two of his fellow Apostles invited him to meet in council with them the next morning. He promised to be present, but he did not appear. However, it being Sunday, he was present at the regular public meeting which met at ten o'clock. When Pratt and his associates arrived Rigdon told them he had been prevented from keeping his appointment due to the unexpected arrival of a "Philadelphia Lawyer."

The Mormons who were assembled that Sabbath morning were privileged in hearing one of the strangest sermons that ever fell from Christian lips. Some of the fragments which have been preserved,¹ sound more like the ravings of an unbalanced mind than merely some extravagant bits of apocalyptic oratory.² His text was aptly chosen, and with slight alterations it would have served him well as an epitaph. It read: "For my thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways my ways, saith the Lord." He disclosed to his listeners God's will concerning Mormon leadership; it had been revealed to him in vision while in Pittsburgh. The Church must now be guided by a "Guardian" who should "build the Church up to Joseph as he had begun it." He had also learned from the vision that he was the divinely appointed "Guardian" and the "identical man that the ancient prophets had sung about, wrote and rejoiced over, and that he was sent to do the work that had been the theme of all the prophets in every preceding generation." To prove that "the Lord's ways were not their ways" he called their attention to the fact that somewhere in Holy writ, He had promised to "Hiss for the fly from the

1. All the short quotations which are unlabeled in this chapter are found in "The Trial of Sidney Rigdon" as it appears in Times and Seasons, V, 647--; also Improvement Era, III, 493.

2. At a later date Orson Hyde thus apostrophized him: "Mr. Rigdon, do you not remember how you came into a certain council about the 1st of April or latter part of March last, (1844) that had been organized by Joseph Smith; and also how you danced and shouted, and threw your feet so high that you came well nigh falling backwards upon the stove? Certainly you must remember this; for you frothed at the mouth like a mad man, and gave glory to God so long and loud that you became entirely hoarse and exhausted." (Quoted by I. Riley, Founder of Mormonism, p. 264.)

uttermost parts of the rivers of Egypt, and for the bee that is in the land of Assyria," and thereby destroy His enemies. This passage brought to his mind the fact that "The time was near at hand when he (Rigdon) would see one hundred tons of metal per second thrown at the enemies of God, and that blood would be to the horses' bridles." However, he did not leave his audience much time to meditate upon the gory scene. He informed them that "if it were not for two or three things which he knew, this people (the Mormons?) would be utterly destroyed, and not a soul left to tell the tale." The English converts who listened to that sermon must have been reassured of his power to look after their welfare for he added that in the midst of the great upheaval and bloodshed, he would "walk into the palace of Queen Victoria and lead her out by the nose and no one would have the power to say, 'Why do ye so?'"

The present day reader is little more astonished with the excerpts from the "sermon" than by the fact that nowhere in the records of that period does anyone even hint that Rigdon was mentally unbalanced. His statements were too crude and ridiculous to attribute them entirely to wilful deception. His protracted sickness, coupled with an eager desire to gain the supreme position of leadership, partly account for his strange utterances.

In the afternoon he persuaded his friend, William Marks, the local church official of Nauvoo, to announce that he would have to leave at once for Pittsburg; therefore, a meeting should be held the following Thursday to decide upon accepting him as "Guardian" to the Church. Rigdon attempted to have the meeting called for Tuesday, but Elder Richards "purposed to wait until the rest of the 'Twelve' arrived;" and Elder Brover expressed some doubts concerning the revelation itself. Rigdon agreed to wait until Thursday, but no longer. "If the people had anything for him to do he wanted to know at once, for people numbering thousands and tens of thousands were waiting to receive him."

Some of the brethren became alarmed over the course he was pursuing. The next morning (Monday) he was again invited to a private official gathering. This time he appeared but proved more intractable. He paced the room and said, "Gentlemen, you are used up; gentlemen, you're all divided; the anti-Mormons have got you;... everything is in confusion;... you lack a great leader; the anti-Mormons will carry the election--a "guardian" must be appointed." Before the close of this session his associates were able to calm him sufficiently so that he would listen to their arguments that division did not exist, that they would win the election, etc. Before the meeting was dismissed, Rigdon said that he did not expect^{the} people to choose a "guardian" on Thursday. They would simply have a prayer-meeting where they would "inter-change their thoughts and feelings and warm each other's hearts."

Brigham Young, the President of the "Twelve" arrived on Tuesday (August 6, 1844) and events began taking a new course. On Wednesday he called upon Rigdon to learn what he intended to do and the true significance of his visions and revelations concerning the church. Rigdon described his vision to Brigham Young "as a continuation of the vision mentioned in the Doctrine and Covenants," and after going into details concerning his divine appointment closed his part of the conversation by saying: "I propose to be Guardian to the people; in this I have discharged my duty and done what God has commanded me, and the people can please themselves whether they accept me or not." Brigham Young was not convinced; he said he "did not care who would lead the Church, but one thing he must know, and that was what God said about it." By way of emphasis he further added that, "I (B. Young) have the keys and the means of obtaining the mind of God on the subject."

A great multitude of Nauvoo's citizens gathered for the Thursday meeting. It was held in the open at 10 A. M. Rigdon harangued the Mormons for one and one-half hours upon the necessity of choosing a "Guardian" for the Church. When he had finished, Brigham Young announced that another meet-

ing would be held in the afternoon. Still larger crowds were assembled at the appointed hour. Brigham Young had all the Church officers gathered in orderly arrangement about him when the meeting opened. He took charge and was the principal speaker. With few preliminary remarks he came directly to the question of leadership. It is interesting to note that neither Rigdon nor Brigham Young claimed the right to be Prophetic successor to Joseph Smith. Rigdon proposed to guide the Church as a "Guardian;" Brigham Young insisted that the governing power should rest with the "Twelve." Several years passed before Brigham Young was formally presented before the Church as "President." In his speech he presented the problem before the people as being whether Rigdon should be appointed "Guardian" or whether the "Twelve" should control affairs as a quorum. Among other things he said:

Here is President Rigdon, who was Counselor to Joseph. I ask "Where are Joseph and Hyrum?" They are gone beyond the veil; and if Elder Rigdon is to act as his Counselor, he must go beyond the veil where he is... The Twelve are appointed by the finger of God. Here is Brigham, have his knees ever faltered? Have his lips ever quivered... The Twelve, an independent body, have the keys of the Priesthood. This is true so help me God... Do you want a spokesman to be chief cook and bottle washer?... If he (Rigdon) wants now to be a spokesman to the Prophet, he must go to the other side of the veil, for the Prophet is there, but Elder Rigdon is here. Why will Elder Rigdon be a fool?... I will ask, "Who has stood next to Joseph and Hyrum?" I have, and I will stand next to him.¹

At the close of Brigham Young's speech Rigdon called upon W. W. Phelps to speak in his behalf. Phelps arose and said: "If you want to do right, uphold the "Twelve". If they die, I am willing to die with them; but do your duty and you will be endowed."

Brigham Young then put the question before the Congregation in this form: "Does the Church want, and is it their only desire to sustain the 'Twelve' as the First Presidency of this people?" The vote was unanimous, so he did not call for a negative vote. He then brought the meeting to a close with these remarks:

We feel we could take Brother Rigdon in our bosom along with us;

1. Improvement Era, III, 490

we want such a man as Brother Rigdon. He has been sent away by Brother Joseph to build up a kingdom; let him keep the instructions and calling; let him raise up a mighty kingdom in Pittsburg, and we will lift up his hands to Almighty God... I feel to bring up Brother Rigdon with us; we are of one mind with him and he with us. Will this congregation uphold him in the place he occupies by the prayer of faith and let him be one with us and we one with him?¹

Again the voting was unanimous; and although many who were present may not have been exactly clear in their minds just what the position was which Rigdon "occupied" yet they were all certain that he was not to be "Guardian" over the Church. Mormon historians consider August 8, 1844, an important date in the history of their Church. They not only record the fortunate arrival of Brigham and the wise choice of the people; but they also record the later testimonies of pious members that during Brigham Young's plea for himself and the "Twelve" the "mantle" of the dead Prophet fell upon him. "President Young stood transfigured before them and they beheld the Prophet Joseph Smith and heard his voice as naturally as ever they did when he was living. It was a manifestation to the Saints that they might recognize the correct authority."²

If Rigdon had been willing to play some secondary part to Brigham Young for the remainder of his life, he would have achieved undying fame in Mormon history. The same observation would hold true with respect to his earlier "Campbellite" affiliations. Rigdon would have been listed among the founders of that sect if he had only humbled himself before Alexander Campbell. He had the necessary emotional qualifications to arouse people and loosen them from their traditional religious moorings, but he did not possess the intellectual stability essential for leadership. Perhaps a greater contrast of personalities did not exist among the Mormons than existed between Brigham Young and Sidney Rigdon.

1. Ibid., p. 492.

2. J. F. Smith, Essentials in Church History, p. 385.

After Rigdon was defeated in his attempt to gain supreme control he did not openly break with Brigham Young and the "Twelve". Neither was he in such a hurry (to leave?) Nauvoo as he had been prior to the decision. The records show that three weeks later (Sunday, Sept. 1, 1844), he spoke at a public meeting. On that occasion he seemed resigned to his position. He "poured blessings on the people to an unbounded degree, encouraged the building up of the city and temple, and said he was one with them." He referred once more to the terrible battle which should be fought somewhere by the Brook of Kedron and the rough treatment Queen Victoria should receive at his hands."¹

However, the next night he held a secret meeting with a few who believed him to be the divinely appointed successor to the Prophet, and he ordained some of them to be Prophets, Priests, and Kings. The news of this meeting reached Brigham Young the following day and he determined to have a definite understanding with Rigdon. Accompanied by Orson Hyde he called at Rigdon's residence, sat down directly in front of him, took hold of his hand, looked him in the eyes and "asked him if he had a meeting in which men were ordained to be Prophets, Priests, and Kings?" After several evasive answers he admitted that a meeting was held; and eventually when questioned to the point where he either had to tell a direct lie or admit the facts, he said that men were ordained to such offices and that he believed that he possessed the highest authority in the Mormon Church. As Brigham Young continued to press him with questions he protested that "his feelings were being crowded too much." At this point Brigham Young departed after notifying him that the "Twelve" would call in the evening.²

When the "Twelve" arrived they asked him for his license. We have observed already that in the early days of Kirtland, the Prophet had demanded

1. Times and Seasons, V, 652.

2. Ibid., 648.

him to give up his license for a short period. But from the "Twelve"

Rigdon refused to honor such a request. His answer was:

I did not receive it from you neither shall I give it up to you. Inasmuch as you have demanded my license, I shall find it my duty to publish all your secret meetings and all the history of the secret works of this Church, in the public journals... There is a rod and a scourge awaits this people... I have sat and laughed up my sleeve at the proceedings of the "Twelve" this evening, for they have been fulfilling in the last act the vision I had a Pittsburg. I knew you would oppose me in my movements. I knew you would withdraw fellowship from me. It was also shown to me in the vision.¹

Some of his listeners accused him of "endeavoring to palm upon the people false revelations and lies in the name of the Lord." This excited him still further and he told them

He was to help fight a bloody battle in some appointed place... This battle was not to be a war of words, not a battle with the tongue, but with the sword; it will be a bloody battle; the great God has revealed it to me and no one shall beat me out of it.

He also added as they departed: "You are not led by the Lord, and I have known it for a long time that you were not led by the Lord."²

So far as the records show, this was the last attempt to bring him under the supervision of the "Twelve." Brigham Young and his supporters made preparations to try him for his Church membership. Through the Neighbor, their local newspaper, the public was notified of the "Trial" which should be held the following Sunday. At the appointed hour everybody of importance in Nauvoo, except Sidney Rigdon, was present. Brigham Young took charge. In his opening remarks he told the people that the "Twelve" should act as witnesses and not as judges. Before calling the first "witness" he told the congregation that he had a great love for Rigdon as a private citizen. He cited, that in times past he had proved his love by lying on Rigdon's floor "night after night and week after week" to defend him in case of mob attack. But he said that he had travelled thousands of miles "in poverty and tri-

1. Ibid., 650-51

2. Ibid., 652

bulation" for the Church--many times with blood in his shoes--and he did not intend to see his friendship for Rigdon interfere with the interests of the Church. As he expressed it: "When it touches the salvation of the people, I am the man that walks to the line." He said that some claimed Rigdon's absence was due to sickness, but he had sent no notice of his inability to be present. After enumerating some of Rigdon's heretical actions and statements since the death of the Prophet, he closed with the following: "Elder Rigdon has not conducted himself like a man of God, he has not conducted himself like a Prophet of God, nor a Counsellor to the First President since he came here. We prefer these charges against him and the High Council will be obliged to act."¹

Orson Hyde, who had known Rigdon for many years then spoke. He repeated many of the accusations presented by Brigham Young and called the attention of the people to the fact that "He (Rigdon) was the cause of our troubles in Missouri, and although Brother Joseph tried to restrain him he would take his own course; and if he goes to exposing the secrets of this Church, as he says, the world will throw him down and trample him under their feet."²

P. P. Pratt was next called upon to speak. He said that he had a strong feeling of friendship for Rigdon, that they had worked together in a Church before either was converted to Mormonism, and that he had been the first to present Rigdon with a Book of Mormon, which led to his conversion. However, he did not allow friendship to spare the man. He exposed the wild private statements which Rigdon had been making during the past few weeks and called attention to the strange sermons he had preached to the public.

1. Ibid., p. 647.
2. Ibid., p. 651.

Of all the "witnesses" who spoke Amasa Lyman was one of the least sparing in his denunciations of Rigdon:

Where has this individual been for these years past? Has he been laboring to support and uphold the man whom God has appointed to bring forth this work? Has he been endeavoring for the last four or five years to build up the principles taught and laid down by the man of God? This man who has been asleep all the while, when he was not too sick to sleep and smoke his pipe and take his drink, corresponds with John C. Bennett and other mean, corrupt men. This is the character of the man on whom shines the light of revelation; this is the man who says "The Twelve have gone astray and this Church is not led by the Lord." This man is made generalissimo of all the armies of the Gentiles, I suppose; this is the man who is to fight those wonderful battles till the blood of the slain flows as high as the horses' bridles in the brook Kedron. For the last four or five years we have never heard of Sidney's getting a revelation, but, as soon as Brother Joseph is out of the way, he manufactures one to allure the people and destroy them... Now this is the man who has got the keys of the conquest, the keys of David..."... It may be pleaded that Sidney Rigdon may be mistaken. If he should, it is not the first time he has been mistaken in his revelation.¹

When Bishop Whitney was given an opportunity to speak he told the people that he

Never had any confidence in Brother Rigdon as a revelator. Because I have so repeatedly heard Brother Joseph rebuke him for speaking, in the name of the Lord, what was not so. He was always either in the bottom of the cellar or up in the garret window... If such things as are contained in his revelation have been revealed to him, it is from a source with which we want nothing to do... I believe he is an evil designing man. He is dishonest, and he has lied to carry out his theory... I feel to sustain the "Twelve" in withdrawing their fellowship, and I think the High Council and the Church ought to sustain the decision of the Twelve.²

Bishop Whitney then called upon the High Council to give its decision. The vote was unanimous in favor of the decision of the "Twelve". This was not definite enough to satisfy Elder O. Hyde, so Elder W. W. Phelps moved that "Elder Sidney Rigdon be cut off from the Church and delivered over to the buffetings of Satan until he repents." The High Council again voted in the affirmative. The motion was then presented to the congregation and the vote was unanimous in the affirmative except "a few of Elder Rigdon's party." The negative vote was then taken and they numbered "about ten."

1. Improvement Era, III, 584-85.

2. Ibid., pp. 385-86.

Brigham Young then arose and delivered Sidney Rigdon over to the buffetings of Satan, in the name of the Lord. And all the people said, "Amen."¹ And thus ended Rigdon's "trial" and his membership in the Mormon Church. He was a very unpopular man that day. William Marks was the only person who attempted to say a good word in his defense. He called attention to the fact that many of the accusations against Rigdon had been of long standing and were supposed to have been settled at the time the Prophet attempted to oust him at a general conference. He also mentioned that Rigdon had been ordained "A Prophet, Seer, and Revelator" to the Church a short time before his departure to Pittsburg and that a notice of this had been published in The Times and Seasons. Marks said that he knew of no other man in the Church who had ever been ordained to such an office.²

His plea was none too vigorous, and it is doubtful whether any argument would have been effective on that occasion. Rigdon was doomed before the meeting opened. If there had been any chance of swinging a large number of people to his side he would have been at the meeting armed with all his oratory. It was not a question of Sidney Rigdon or Brigham Young for church leadership which the people had to decide. It was Sidney Rigdon or all the leading officers in the organization. Great men have frequently failed in the face of institutionalized opposition. A man of Rigdon's personality and ability has never been known to win against such odds. His success would have been a most unfortunate calamity to the Mormon cause.

1. Ibid., pp. 386-87.

2. A few months later (Dec. 15, 1844) the following notice appeared in the Times and Seasons: "Notice!! After mature and candid deliberation I am fully and satisfactorily convinced that Mr. Sidney Rigdon's claims to the presidency of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, are not founded in truth. I have been deceived by his specious pretences, and now feel to warn every one over whom I may have any influence to beware of him, and his pretended visions and revelations. The Twelve are the proper persons to lead the church." Signed, William Marks.

CHAPTER VIII

SIDNEY RIGDON--MORMON SCHISMATIC

As we have observed, Rigdon was excommunicated September 8, (1844). The action against him aroused his old activity which had been sleeping for about five years. He removed to Pittsburg and made preparations to fulfill the revelation which he had delivered in Nauvoo. He was one of the first to attempt a rival organization to Nauvoo and the "Twelve," and like the others he met with little success.¹ His aim seems to have been to duplicate the Mormon Church as it had existed in Kirtland. It was during the Kirtland period that he had been most intimately associated with the Prophet and his chief contributions to Mormonism must have been made at that time.

On October 15 (1844) he revived and published the Latter Day Saints' Messenger and Advocate. This magazine had been one of the first published in the Church. When he had collected a number of followers they took upon themselves the early name of the Church, once more going by the name of "The Church of Christ." At the first annual conference (April 6-11, 1845), there appears to have been a deliberate attempt to reproduce the scenes and initiations which took place at Kirtland when the temple was dedicated. However, more shall be said about this later.

1. The following groups attempted to rival Brigham Young and his supporters: James J. Strang and his followers at Beaver Island, Lake Michigan. See Kingdom of St. James, by Quaife, for an excellent treatment of this group. William Smith, a brother of the Prophet, stood by the "Twelve" for a short time, then attempted to draw disciples away. He was unsuccessful and eventually joined the "Reorganized L.D.S." group. Lyman Wight led a party away from the main body of the church. This group first went to Wisconsin and from there to Texas where it came to an end at Wight's death in 1858. The Bickertonites, a few families who followed William Bickerton who claimed to be a disciple of Rigdon's for a short time, The Baneemyites, The Brewsterites, The Hedrickites, and The Whitmerites (called "The Church of Christ"). The Reorganized L.D.S. group had a membership of 64,376 in 1926.

The first issue of his magazine states that

In resuscitating the Latter-Day Saints Messenger and Advocate, it is the intention of the subscriber to contend for the same doctrines, order of Church government and discipline maintained by that paper when first published in Kirtland, Ohio. (p. 16)

Besides proclaiming the objectives which he had in view, the first number of the paper revealed by its articles how he was going to achieve his desired ends. Through pointing out the iniquity of the leaders at Nauvoo it was hoped that many people would desert them. Up to this time polygamy was not openly taught, but Joseph Smith and some of his leading Elders had been privately practicing it. Through condemning polygamy it was necessary to condemn Joseph Smith as a fallen prophet, or deny that he taught such a doctrine. In later years "The Reorganized L.D.S. Church," followed the latter course, but in the time immediately following the Prophet's death it would have been a foolish argument because too many men and women were aware of the facts.

Another point of argument which appeared in the first issue was that Rigdon himself was the divinely appointed successor to the Prophet. At a little later period Rigdon attempted to attract members to Pittsburg by prophesying the destruction of Nauvoo, and the "Twelve" accused him of predicting that the temple should not be built. Various writers in the Times and Seasons state that Rigdon threatened to bring a mob¹ upon the city of Nauvoo, but he indignantly denied prophecies against the temple and all statements connecting him with mobs.

Rigdon was always an enemy of polygamy. In his first issue he writes (p. 12):

It would seem almost impossible that there could be found a set of men and women, in this age of the world, with the revelations of God in their hands, who could invent and propogate doctrines so ruinous to society, so debasing, and demoralizing as the doctrine of a man having a plurality of wives... First insulting innocent females, and when they resented the insult,

1. See Times and Seasons, V, 742.

these monsters in human shape would assail their characters by lying and perjuries... I could bring facts which can be established in any court of justice in relation to these vile abominations practised under the garb of religion that would make humanity blush.

As time went on he became more and more severe in his denunciations of the "Twelve" and the practice of polygamy. Every issue in the first volume of his paper contains some sharp criticism of Nauvoo and its morals. Many times Rigdon was the author of these articles, but sometimes his assistants would take up the pen against their former associates. In retaliation to a criticism made by one of the "Twelve" concerning his views of preparation for Christ's coming, Rigdon replied that the "Twelve" would prepare for the Lord's coming, "by sleeping with other men's wives! But let those ignoramuses foam out their own shame." (p. 101)

In condemning Joseph Smith of polygamy, Rigdon was more hesitant. Several reasons can be advanced for this. First, it was an unwise policy to criticize the dead Prophet too sharply if he hoped to win a following from Nauvoo. Joseph Smith did not lose his prophetic title at the time of his death, but he was given in addition a martyr's crown. On the other hand, Rigdon had been his counsellor, and if the prophet had been living contrary to the revelations of God he should have denounced the practice at the outset. As we have already observed, Rigdon had opposed polygamy so far as it concerned his own daughter, but he had not openly opposed the Prophet. On the contrary he was willing to undergo a most humiliating exhibition before a Church conference rather than be removed from his position as counsellor to the Prophet.

However, as time went on he openly took the stand that Joseph Smith was a "fallen Prophet." Perhaps his stand was about the same as the one taken by David Whitmer in later years, "that some of Joseph Smith's prophecies were from God, some from man, and some from the devil." A position of this kind made it very convenient for those who rejected polygamy yet believed in the

Doctrine and Covenants and the Book of Mormon. To those who are skeptical concerning the Prophet's polygamous practices the following should be of interest. In the very first issue of his paper Rigdon published an article by Samuel Forgeus which was little short of an open accusation. One part of it reads:

But, enquires the objector, you believe Joseph transgressed? I answer, he himself confessed he was but a man and liable to sin like other men. But, says one, do you believe that he was cut off for transgressions? I reply, he had the promise, if he remained faithful, he should translate the other plates of the Book of Mormon, which are now sealed; also that he said and did many things in direct opposition to the word of God, as given through himself; but we do not judge him, we leave him in the hands of a just and merciful God. (p. 2)

The first direct statement that Joseph Smith was a "fallen Prophet" because of his introducing the practice of polygamy, is found in the second number (p. 10) of Rigdon's Messenger and Advocate:

Was Joseph Smith cut off for transgression? I answer, if the Lord is to be believed he was; for he expressly promises that if Joseph abided in him, he should stand in the office in which he was placed, until the coming of the Son of Man... How did he transgress the law of God? I answer, he taught the doctrine that a man could have ten wives.

The foregoing article was written by Samuel Bennett, a follower of Rigdon who later became editor of the paper. Sometimes a statement appeared telling the reader that Rigdon was not to be held accountable for material in the current issue because of his absence from town. However, before many months passed Rigdon was quite willing to print the following without any accompanying apology or qualification:

On Thursday evening we gave the history of Nauvoo, and the events that led to the death of the Smiths, which, of course, we traced to the introduction of the spiritual wife system; for all do know, that know anything about it, that it was the introduction of that system which led to the death of the Smiths, and that if that system had not been introduced they might have been living men today. (Ibid., p. 145.)

Years later (Mar. 27, 1866) when his following had almost dwindled away, he received a revelation on the subject of polygamy for the guidance of his followers and particularly for Stephen Post:

The word of the Lord to his servant Stephen Post concerning the things whereof he has inquired. I, the Lord, say unto my servant Stephen that the system of Polygamy as had among a people who were called after my name was not of me, saith the Lord. I, the Lord, your Redeemer, disavow it. I never gave to Joseph Smith or any other man authority to introduce in my name that system... It is before me, saith the Lord, an abomination... As to those who have not polluted themselves with polygamy, the thing I, the Lord, hate, they can be baptized again or not. If they are dissatisfied with their baptism let them be baptized again so that they can act in good faith before me saith the Lord.¹

After Rigdon broke with the "Twelve" he no longer called Joseph Smith "The Prophet;" but from then on he referred to Joseph and his brother Hyrum, who was killed with him as "the Smiths." However, he and his followers claimed a high regard for the Book of Mormon and the Doctrine and Covenants. It was from revelations in the latter which they based many of their claims of Rigdon's divine appointment. In one place the revelations stated that "If he (Joseph Smith) shall transgress he shall have no power except to appoint another in his stead." (See "M. & A." p. 10). Another fragment (see "D. & C." Sec. 124:104) said that Rigdon "Shall lift up his voice again on the mountains, and be a spokesman before my (i.e., the Lord's?) face." By coupling the statement published by Joseph Smith in June 1844, to the foregoing revelations it seemed clear to some that Rigdon was not only their choice, but also God's choice. The announcement of June 1, 1844 said, "We have to announce that Sidney Rigdon has been ordained a Prophet, Seer, and Revelator." In brief the argument for Rigdon was about as follows: Joseph Smith had been a true prophet down to the time of his introduction of polygamy, which angered God and caused the Prophet's death. The Lord had known that his Prophet would fall so he had him ordain Sidney Rigdon as Prophet, Seer, and Revelator, to succeed him. In a cryptic manner God had notified the Mormons of the true situation even before the Prophet was slain. He had said that his servant Sidney should be a spokesman unto Him. Thus he was God's spokesman and not

1. Journal of History, IV, No. 3, 179.

merely spokesman to the Prophet. The Lord had also said, "He (Rigdon) shall lift up his voice again on the mountains." This was plain enough to the faithful that God referred to Rigdon's return to Pennsylvania. Pennsylvania was a mountainous country, or at least hilly, and Rigdon had preached there in his early life. Therefore, the statement that he should lift up his voice in the mountains "again" made matters very clear.

But Rigdon was not dependent upon scriptures which the "Twelve" interpreted one way and he interpreted another. He claimed Direct revelation from God. Sometimes his revelations were for individuals, sometimes for a city and at times for the whole world. Three months after leaving Nauvoo he prophesied against the place:

God is not to be thus trifled with. These efforts of desperation will avail them (the "Twelve") nothing. They have trifled with Jehovah; they have set at naught his revealed will...Know reader, that He who rules in the heavens has declared the fate of Nauvoo; and all shall see his hand on Nauvoo for destruction, and not for salvation; for Nauvoo, on account of the iniquities of her people, will be desolated. The saints there have polluted their inheritance, and God will cast them down, and make them an example to all those who come after them; and all the efforts of men to the contrary will not save her.

The Mormons of Nauvoo published statements that Rigdon had prophesied that the temple should never be finished. This may have had some effect upon the doggedness with which they pursued their labors on that building even though mobs became more menacing daily, and it was clear that the city must be deserted. Rigdon denied having ever made any such prophecy. He also denied any attempt to bring mobs upon the doomed city or to associate with the other apostates who had been the enemies of the Prophet.

Information is scarce on the life of Rigdon after the first year of his break with the "Twelve". He did not have a large following at any time, but perhaps his strongest period was in 1845--the year following his break with the "Twelve." In April of that year his disciples gathered at Pittsburg at which time they organized themselves into a separate body from the Nauvoo group. Few changes were made in the Church organization as it had

1. Messenger and Advocate, p. 515.

existed in the days of the Prophet. The published revelations of Joseph Smith were accepted as genuine along with the Book of Mormon. They called the new organization "The Church of Christ," which had been the original name of the followers of Joseph Smith. They now called the Nauvoo group "The Mormons", and claimed to have nothing in common with them. A brief sketch of the conference minutes may show Rigdon's ideas of a perfect church:

The First Day:¹ (Sunday Morning, April 6, 1845) Sidney Rigdon preached to his saints on the subject of the priesthood. His text was, "But ye are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, an holy nation, a peculiar people; that ye should shew forth the praises of him who hath called you out of darkness into marvelous light."

In the afternoon: The sacrament was passed to all the believers "at which time the spirit of the Lord was poured out in great effusion on the whole assembly, and the meeting was interesting beyond anything before known."

In the evening: A baptismal service was held at which time twenty-nine were immersed.

Monday morning, April 7, 1845: After the congregation sang the first song, Rigdon "kneeled before God, with the conference, and addressed him in solemnity, in tears, and in strong and fervent supplication, and dedicated himself and the conference to Almighty God." He then invited all those who had been ordained Prophets, Priests, and Kings, to take front seats; and gave them a solemn warning to take heed, "that no man take thy crown...Act in your authority, and bear off triumphantly the Church and Kingdom of God. Here is the beginning--you must triumph until you meet the Son of God on Mount Olivet.--I lay it upon you in the name of Jesus, that you shall be the

1. The following quotations are from the conference minutes. They are found in The Messenger and Advocate, I, 168-73; 185-89

kings over whom the Son of God shall reign as King of Kings and Lord of Lords."

He then said that he had established the kingdom after the pattern which God had revealed to him. At this point he asked the congregation what office should he hold. Elder Cole nominated him "President of the Kingdom and Church," "It was then put to the whole church, and was carried in the affirmative, without a dissenting voice." The next part in the service was directed by W. E. McLellin, who had caused considerable trouble during the Prophet's lifetime. He "stepped forward in obedience to the word of the Lord to him in a vision and took the President by the hand, and declared his determination to stand by him and his family in all righteousness before God until the time of the end..."

After nominating various officers Rigdon returned to McLellin's gesture and said, "He understood its weight, its importance and bearings." It was a pattern for all the officers to follow so they marched before Rigdon, took his hand and made similar covenants with him. The minutes read that they "gave vent by words and tears...pen or language cannot paint before the mind the scene." When Rigdon's brother stepped forward he "recounted over the history of their youth, the scenes of early life and their present union in the kingdom of heaven." At this point "the whole house melted into tears." And thus ended the long Monday morning session.

Monday afternoon, April 7, 1845: Rigdon proposed that a committee draft "a preamble and resolutions expressive of the views and feelings of this Kingdom, relative to the people of Nauvoo." He then delivered a sermon on the "Kingdom" at which time he told his officials that everything "must be done by unanimous consent, one dissenting voice against a matter kills it." He also told them "the kingdom is yours." He informed his listeners why God said he would set up a Kingdom in the last days. "It was because righteousness

had departed from the earth, and iniquity prevailed, and if the Savior came and found the whole world in iniquity, he would curse the whole earth ... Before your eyes you have a pattern of iniquity in Nauvoo which is governed by principles the very opposite of the kingdom of heaven." This session began by the congregation singing "Behold the Glories of the Lamb;" and it ended with "The Spirit of God like a Fire is Burning."

Tuesday morning: The same type of meeting continued. Fourteen missionaries were appointed to begin their labors in various sections of the country. Along with the publication of the minutes the editor inserted the following: "We have just received the startling intelligence, that at 52 minutes past 3 o'clock P.M., on Monday, the 7th of April, the City of Mexico was nearly destroyed by an earthquake.--Our readers will bear in mind that that was the very day on which the Kingdom of God was organized in this city."

Wednesday afternoon: It seems that in spite of former revelations Rigdon was still unsettled on certain points up to this date. After the congregation sang, "Arise, Arise, With Joy Survey," Rigdon opened the meeting with the following statement:

Since the commencement of this conference I have had one unceasing desire, deep and intense... to have the matter forever put at rest, whether God would accept our work... The spirit whispered me this morning to set apart some brethren, and consecrate them to God, in a room in my own house, which I did... and after washing and anointing, and the Patriarchal seal, as the Lord had directed me, we kneeled and in solemn prayer asked God to accept the work we had done; during the time of the prayer there appeared over our heads, in the room a ray of light forming a hollow square, inside of which stood a company of heavenly messengers, each with a banner in his hand, with their eyes looking downward upon us...; there also appeared heavenly messengers on horseback with crowns upon their heads, and plumes floating in the air, dressed in glorious attire until, like Elisha, we cried in our hearts, "the chariots of Israel, and the horsemen thereof;" even my little son of fourteen years of age saw the vision, and gazed with great astonishment, saying, that he thought his imagination was running away with him, after which we arose and lifted our hands to heaven in holy convocation to God at which time, it was shown an angel in heaven registering the acceptance of that organization by our heavenly Father, is now forever at rest.¹

1. Ibid., p. 185.

One would think that such a vision as the one described above would signify that the "kingdom" was perfect in the sight of heaven. For two more days there was a continuous round of "solemn" covenant makings, "washings, anointings, and sealings." One covenant which he described as "solemn, sublime, and grand" was "to bind the hearts of the fathers to the children and the hearts of the children to the fathers." Another covenant was somewhat on the order of ancient magic. The saints had organized the Kingdom as Daniel said it should be organized and as God had revealed it to Rigdon; therefore, they could force God's hand. This was to be done by binding "the heavens by a covenant that his kingdom...may triumph." This heaven-binding covenant was "entered into before God, by all standing on their feet, with their hands lifted to heaven, while the President (Rigdon) pronounced the covenant, which was sealed by a loud Amen of every individual."

The Thursday (April 10, 1845) on which a session of their conference was held, the city of Pittsburg long remembered. On that date a large percentage of the entire city was destroyed by fire. It was the worst calamity that had ever befallen Pittsburg up to that time. Rigdon and his followers took a good share of the credit of preventing the City's entire destruction. The following appears in the conference minutes:

This was the afternoon of the great fire which desolated our city. While we were thus organizing the Kingdom of God, and consecrating the officers thereof, to the Most High, our city was fast laying in ruins by the violence of fire... In the closing prayer, for the adjournment, President Rigdon prevented before the Lord the deep distress... of the city... The conference joined with all feelings of their souls. During this prayer, an escort of heavenly messengers that had hovered around during the time of the conference, were seen leaving the room, the course of the wind was instantly changed, and the violence of the flames were stayed, and our city saved from entire overthrow.¹

Some of Rigdon's followers caught a portion of his fire and enthusiasm at the conference. McLellin testified to the congregation that

1. Messenger and Advocate, pp. 168-89 for Conference report.

he had seen the vision of the horses and the plumed riders, mentioned by Rigdon, and before adjournment took place he related a revelation which God had granted unto him and Joseph Cole. It had reference to what should be done with "the bones of said Joseph Cole." Cole was shown in vision that he would "be slain before the coming of the Savior. The revelation had required on the part of Brother McLellin that he should enter into a covenant with brother Cole, to carry his bones with him, as the bones of Joseph were carried out of Egypt, until the kingdom of God should meet Jesus upon Mount Olivet." McLellin had some of his enthusiasm left after he started his missionary work. He wrote to the Editor of the Messenger and Advocate (p. 233)

I tell you brethren I am a living miracle of preaching. I preach about all the time when I am awake, and I dream about the things of the Kingdom when I sleep. Not one flitting even of unhappiness has rolled across my heart--so far as my religion is concerned, since the 6th of April.

There is no evidence available as to the number that Rigdon attracted to his conference in 1845, but from the fact that the minutes are silent on this subject, one suspects the gathering was not numerous. Whatever the number was it may have been the largest group that ever assembled to call him "president, Prophet, Seer, Revelator, Translator, and Trustee and Trust" to the "Church of Christ." He visited Kirtland and cities throughout New England and attempted to gather disciples about him. Many times people flocked to his meetings to hear his stories of the "polygamous Mormons" at Nauvoo; but few came to be instructed in his way of salvation.

Through visions, revelations, prophecies, and optimistically written articles he attempted to hold a following and make new disciples, but eventually he found himself alone. Most of his followers seem to have shifted to the "reorganized L.D.S. Church," which denounced polygamy from its beginning; and in the face of abundant evidence to the contrary, they have maintained that the Mormon Prophet never taught such a doctrine at any time.

When Nauvoo fell before the mobbers, its citizens driven out and its temple destroyed, Rigdon and his followers looked upon it as the fulfillment of his prophecy concerning the place. Very likely he and his devout followers were greatly excited when the Civil War began because he predicted that a great war in America would be the beginning of the great conflict which would usher in Christ's reign.¹ However, no records are available on the subject.

A brief notice is made in 1869 by the President of the "Reorganized L.D.S. Church"² that "about fourteen or fifteen families" were gathered "at Attica, Marion County, Iowa, the place appointed by Sidney for the gathering of the saints." This little gathering was under the direction of Stephen Post.

In 1863 Sidney Rigdon's son, John W. Rigdon³ crossed the plains on his way to California. While passing through Salt Lake City he visited some of his boyhood playmates of Nauvoo days. He also visited Brigham Young who had been the successful rival against his father. In response to Brigham Young's urgent request he wrote to his father and extended the Mormon leader's invitation for him to come and reside in Salt Lake City. His invitation was never accepted. Rigdon refused to make peace with Brigham Young though he would have been well-treated the remainder of his days had he been willing to do so.⁴

In the Kirtland days of the Mormon Church, Brigham Young had slept on guard on Rigdon's floor, looking after the safety of his Master, like a

1. Ibid., pp. 114-15.

2. Church History, V, 533.

3. Improvement Era, III, 698.

4. Martin Harris had been exceptionally active against Brigham Young after the death of the Prophet. At one time he made a trip to England, hoping to turn converts from the Utah Mormons. However, in his old age some Mormon Elders found him in poverty at his old home in Kirtland, Ohio. They told Brigham Young about the old man. He was invited to move to Utah; the invitation was accepted, much to the satisfaction of M. Harris and the Utah Mormons. Perhaps Rigdon would have received similar treatment had he accepted the invitation.

faithful watch-dog. Rigdon died in 1876 and Brigham Young died the next year. The latter died a rich and powerful figure, leaving an imprint on the social, economic, and religious life of thousands of people. He proved to be one of the most successful colonizers of modern times. On the other hand Rigdon died in poverty and obscurity. He had planted but he did not enjoy a harvest. Like a fire ball which is thrown in the night, he bounced from one section to another until at last he settled down and the flame became extinguished.

The latter years of his long life were spent at the home of his son-in-law, Earl Wingate, at Friendship, Alleghany County, New York. There he died on July 14, 1876. An obituary sketch of him which was published by a local paper follows:

He was approached by the messengers of young Joseph Smith of Plano, Ill., but he refused to converse or answer any communication which in any way would bring him into notice in connection with the Mormon Church of today. It was his daily custom to visit the post office, get the daily paper, read and converse upon the chief topics of the day. He often engaged in a friendly dispute with the local ministers, and always came out first best on New Testament doctrinal matters. Patriarchal in appearance, and kindly in address, he was often approached by citizens and strangers with a view of obtaining something of the unrecorded mysteries of his life; but citizen, stranger, and persistent reporter all alike failed in eliciting any information as to his knowledge of the Mormon imposture, the motives of his early life, or the religious faith, fears, and hopes of his declining years. Once or twice he spoke excitedly, in terms of scorn, of those who attributed to him the manufacture of the Mormon Bible; but beyond this, nothing. His library was small; he left no manuscripts, and refused persistently to have a picture of himself taken. It can only be said that he was a compound of ability, versatility, honesty, duplicity, and mystery.¹

1. See Linn, op. cit., pp. 319-20.

APPENDIX I

RIGDON AND BRIGHAM YOUNG

"One more anecdote of him. At the time when through the seal of noble Judge McKean, the Utah Kingdom seemed about to collapse, Sidney wrote to Brigham that he would save the church if Brigham would give him one hundred thousand dollars in gold. Brigham was sick when the letter came. When he got better it was read to him. Rolling over in his bed slowly he drawled out: 'I wonder if Sidney wouldn't take one hundred thousand dollars in greenbacks?' I have this delightful little story from an ex-Mormon, who used to be at home at the 'Lion House.'"

(The above is taken from Dr. Wyl's Mormon Portraits. This is a most untrustworthy book from the hand of a German who visited Salt Lake City with the purpose of collecting all the damaging stories available for the anti-Mormon press. I leave the above anecdote's worth to the judgment of the reader.)

APPENDIX II

AN ACCOUNT OF RIGDON'S EFFECTIVE ORATORY

"The preaching of Rigdon in these early missionary days was marked by an unwonted power and fervor, whether from an ambitious desire to make a success of the strange cause he had espoused, or because his heart had in reality been touched by some new ray of spiritual light. In illustration of this point, the following from the pen of the late John Barr, of Cleveland--an authority upon matters of Western Reserve history--will be found of exceeding interest. Said he: 'In 1830 I was deputy sheriff, and being at Willoughby on official business determined to go to Mayfield, which is seven or eight miles up the Chagrin River, and hear Cowdery and Rigdon on the revelations of Mormonism. Varnem J. Card, the lawyer, and myself started early Sunday morning on horseback. We found the roads crowded with people going in the same direction.

"Services in the church were opened by Cowdery, with prayer and singing, in which he thanked God fervently for the new revelation. He related the manner of finding the golden plates of Nephi. He was followed by Rigdon, a famous Baptist preacher, well known throughout the eastern part of the Western Reserve, and also in Western Pennsylvania. His voice and manner were always imposing. He was regarded as an eloquent man at all times, and now he seemed fully aroused. He said that he had not been satisfied in his religious yearnings until now. At night he had often been unable to sleep, walking and praying for more light and comfort in his religion. While in the midst of this agony, he heard of the revelation of Joe Smith, which brother Cowdery had explained. Under this his soul suddenly found peace. It filled all his aspirations.

"At the close of a long harangue in this earnest manner, during which everyone present was silent, though very much affected, he inquired whether anyone desired to come forward and be immersed. Only one man arose. This was an aged dead-beat by the name of Cahoon, who occasionally joined the Shakers, and lived on the country generally.

"The place selected for immersion was in a clear pool in the river above the bridge, around which was a beautiful rise of ground on the west side for the audience. On the east bank was a sharp bluff and some stumps, where Mr. Card and myself stationed ourselves. The time of baptism was fixed at two P.M. Long before this hour the spot was surrounded by as many people as could have a clear view. Rigdon went into the pool, which, at the deepest, was about four feet, and after a suitable address with prayer Cahoon gave one of his most powerful exhortations. The assembly became greatly affected. As he proceeded he called for the converts to step forward. They came through the crowd in rapid succession to the number of thirty and were immersed, with no intermission of the discourse on the part of Rigdon.

"Mr. Card was apparently the most radical, stoical of men-- of clear, unexcitable temperament, with unorthodox and vague religious ideas. While the exciting scene was transpiring below us in the valley and in the pool, the faces of the crowd expressing the most intense emotion, Mr. Card suddenly seized my arm and said, 'Take me away;' taking his arm I saw his face so pale that he seemed to be about to faint. His frame trembled as we walked away and mounted our horses. We rode a mile toward Willoughby before a word was said. Rising the hill out of the valley he seemed to recover and said: 'Mr. Barr, if you had not been there I certainly should have gone into the water.' He said the impulse was irresistible."

(The above is taken from Kennedy, Early Days of Mormonism, pp. 92-94; it appears from his footnote (p. 92) that he found the story in Lippincott's Magazine, 1850, p. 209, under the title of "The Early Days of Mormonism," by P. G. Mather. The article is obviously an exaggeration and perhaps it did not occur in 1830; still it shows that Rigdon could stir people.)

APPENDIX III

ORATION BY SIDNEY RIGDON AT FAR WEST, MISSOURI

July 4, 1838.

Text:--"Better, far better, to sleep with the dead than be oppressed among the living."

Friends and fellow citizens:--By your request, I am called upon to address you this day, under circumstances novel to myself, and, I presume, as much so to most of you; for however frequently we may have met our fellow citizens, in times past, in the places of our nativity, or of our choice, to mingle our feelings with theirs, and unite with them in grateful acknowledgments to our Divine Benefactor, on the anniversary of our national existence, we have never before been assembled by reason of our holy religion, for which cause alone a very large majority are here today. But though our residence here is far from the sepulchres of our father, and from the lands of our nativity and former choice; and our association here, as novel and as strange to ourselves as it could be to any portion of our fellow men; still, we hail the return of the birthday of our liberties with no less feelings of joy and gratitude, nor no less desire for the prosperity and continuance of the fabric of our national government inspires our breasts this day, than when met in the mixed assemblies of all religions, as in times past, in the lands of our nativity. Nor, indeed, could it otherwise be: from our

infancy, we have been traditionated to believe ours to be the best government in the world. Our fathers, our neighbors, and our associates in life have extolled its excellence to the highest pinnacle of fame in our ears, even before we were capable of judging of its merits for ourselves, or were able to form an estimate of its worth. As we advanced in life, we heard nothing else from our statesmen and histories but the perfection and excellence of our public institutions, and the superiority of our government over all the governments of the world, whether they existed in former or latter times. It is the government under which we were born and educated, or else we exchanged another for it, with whose form we were satisfied, and in exchange gave this the preference, and sought, by removal to enjoy its benefits. We have been taught from our cradles to reverence the Fathers of the Revolution, and venerate the very urns which contain the ashes of those who sleep; and every feeling of our hearts responds in perfect unison to their precept. Our country and its institutions are written on the tablet of our hearts, as with the blood of the heroes who offered their lives in sacrifice, to redeem us from oppression. On it towers the flag of freedom, and invites the oppressed to enter, and find an asylum;--under the safeguard of its constitution the tyrant grasp is unfastened, and equal rights and privileges flow to every part of the grand whole. Protected by its laws, and defended by its powers, the oppressed and persecuted saint can worship under his own vine and fig-tree and none can molest or make him afraid. We have always contemplated it, and do now, as the only true fabric of freedom and bulwark of our liberty in the world. Its very existence has taught the civilized world, far surpassing those of a Pitt, Wilberforce, a Canning, or a Grey, and has cast all their efforts in the shade forever: it has stood, and now stands, as the arbiter of the world, the judge of the nations, and the rebuker of tyrants throughout the civilized world, the judge of nations, and the standard of freedom, civil religious and political: by it are acts of all nations tried: and it serves to expose the frauds, and deceptions and crafts of the old world, in attempting to palm upon the people monarchy and aristocracy for republicanism and freedom. So powerful has been its influence, that the hand of the oppressor, even in the old world, has been lightened--tyrants have been made to tremble, and oppressors of mankind have been filled with fear. Thrones, if they have not been cast down, have been stripped of their terror, and the oppressed subject has been measurably delivered from his bondage. Having been rocked in cradle of liberty, and educated in the school of freedom, all our prejudices and prepossessions are deeply rooted in favor of this superlative excellence of a government from which all our privileges and enjoyments have flown. We are wedded to it by the greatest ties,--bound to it by cords as strong as death,--to preserve which should be our thought and our aim, in all our pursuits, to maintain its constitution inviolable, its institutions uncorrupted, its laws unviolated, and its order unchanged.

There is one thing, in the midst of our political differences, which ought to create feelings of joy and gratitude in every heart, and in the bosom of every well-wisher of mankind, that all parties in politics express the strongest desire to preserve both the Union and the constitution unimpaired and unbroken, and only differ about the means to accomplish this object--so desirable, as expressed by all parties. And while this, indeed, is the object of parties in this republic, there is nothing to fear; the prospects for the future will be as flattering as the past, in celebrating this, the anniversary of our independence; all party distinctions should be forgotten--all religious differences should be laid aside. We are members of our

common republic, actually dependent on a faithful execution of its laws for our protection in the enjoyment of our civil, political, and religious privileges; all have a common interest in the preservation of the Union, and in the defence and support of the constitution. Northern, southern, and western interests ought to be forgotten, or lost, for the time being, in the more noble desire to preserve the Union;--we cannot, by rendering it to pieces. In the former, there is hope; in the latter, there is fear--in one, peace; in the other, war. In times of peace it ought to be our aim and our object to strengthen the bonds of the Union, by cultivating peace and good-will among ourselves; and in times of war, to meet our foes sword in hand, and defend our rights at the expense of life. For what is life, when freedom oppressed among the living. All attempts, on the part of religious aspirants, to unite church and state, ought to be repelled with indignation, and every religious society supported in its rights, and in the exercises of its conscientious devotions--the Mohammedan, the pagan and the idolator not excepted--and be partakers equally in the benefits of the government; for if the Union is preserved, it will be endearing the people to it; and this can only be done by securing to all their most sacred rights. The least deviation from the strictest rule of right, on the part of any portion of the people, or their public servants, will create dissatisfaction; that dissatisfaction will end in strife,--strife, in war,--war, in the dissolution of the Union. It is on the virtue of the people that depends the existence of the government, and not in the wisdom of legislators. Wherefore serveth laws (it matters not how righteous in themselves), when the people, in violation of them, tear those rights from one another, which they (the laws) were designed to protect? If we preserve the nation from ruin, and the people from war, it will be by securing to others what we claim ourselves, and being as zealous to defend another's rights as to secure our own. If, on this day, our fathers pledged their fortunes, their lives and their sacred honors, to one another, and to claims which they represented to be free, or to lose all earthly inheritance (not life and honor excepted), so ought we to follow their example, and pledge our fortunes, our lives and our sacred honors, as their children and their successors, in maintaining inviolable what they obtained by their treasure of their blood.

It is now three-score and two years since the God of our fathers, Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, caused the proclamation to go forth among the people of the continents, that the people of this nation should be free, and that over them "kings should not rule and princes decree authority;" and all this preparatory of the great purpose which He had designed to accomplish in the last days, in the face of all people, in order that the Son of God, the Saviour of the world, should come down from heaven, and reign in Mount Zion, and in Jerusalem, and before his ancients gloriously, according to the testimony of the holy prophets since the world began; and it is eight years two months and twenty-eight days since this church of the last days was organized by the revelations of that same Jesus, who is coming to reign before his ancients gloriously--then consisting of six members only. At its first appearance, excitement began to prevail among the people where it made its appearance; and as it increased in members, the excitement increased.

One cause of our heavy persecution is-- the influence which those have in the world whom we have separated from fellowship of the church for their wickedness; who attempted to gratify their vengeance on us, and also to hide their own shame, by foul slanders and base calumny. We were, at one time, represented by them as having all things common; at another, as being enemies to the government; and in other places were represented to be abolitionists; and, indeed, anything they thought best calculated to stir up the

public mind, and to excite public indignation, and, if possible, put an end to the work, by sacrificing some of those who were considered as most active in supporting and defending the cause; but, through the mercy of God, we are still in existence, and have the opportunity of joining with you in the privileges of this day.

We claim our own rights, and are willing that all others shall enjoy theirs. No man shall be at liberty to come into our streets, to threaten us with mobs, for, if he does, he shall atone for it before he leaves the place; neither shall he be at liberty to vilify and slander any of us, for suffer it we will not in this place. We, therefore, take all men to record this day, that we proclaim our liberty this day, as did our fathers; and we pledge, this day, to one another, our fortunes, our lives, and our sacred honors, to be delivered from the persecutions which we have had to endure for the last nine years, or nearly that time. Neither will we indulge any man, or set of men, in instituting vexatious law-suits against us, to cheat us out of our rights; if they attempt it, we say woe be unto them! We this day, then, proclaim ourselves free, with a purpose and a determination that never can be broken.--"No, never! no, never!! no, never!!!"

(From Hunt's Mormons, Etc., pp. 167-80. A copy of this oration is at the Chicago Historical Society in its original pamphlet form.)

"The notable public collections of Mormoniana in America are four in number:--The Church Archives at Salt Lake City; Government publications at Washington; the Berrian collection, New York Public Library, rich in first editions and rare publications of the early Church; the Collection of the State Historical Society of Wisconsin at Madison; which has been of late augmented by the loan of the private collection of Mr. A. T. Schroeder, late of Salt Lake City, embracing 448 books, 43 bound volumes of newspaper files, 232 bound volumes of periodicals, and 550 pamphlets." (I.W.Riley, Founder of Mormonism, pp. 429-30.)

For an exhaustive bibliography on Mormonism the reader is directed to the following: Bulletin of the New York Public Library, #13, 1909, pp. 183-239; I. Woodbridge Riley, The Founder of Mormonism, pp. 429-446; M. R. Werner, Brigham Young, pp. 463-69; H. H. Bancroft, History of Utah, pp. xxi-xlvi.

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