

THE INFLUENCE OF SIDNEY RIGDON UPON THE THEOLOGY OF
" MORMONISM

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PREFACE

The literature of Mormonism, pro and con, is vast.¹ There are five noteworthy collections in the United States: United States government publications at Washington; the collection of the State Historical Society of Wisconsin at Madison; the Berrian Collection, New York Public Library;² the Emma Hale Memorial Library at Independence, Missouri (historical library of the Reorganized church); and the archives of the Utah Mormons at Salt Lake City.

Professor I. Woodbridge Riley's The Founder of Mormonism gives a selected list of more than two hundred works. Arbough's Revelation in Mormonism offers a later and more selective group of about the same number. George Pepperdine College, while still very young, has assembled in its library a respectable group of Mormoniana and is alert for additional accessions. Because of its accessibility the facilities of the latter library, supplemented by loans from Eastern collections, have served for the preparation of this thesis.

¹ H. H. Bancroft, in his History of Utah lists more than two thousand "authorities," all of which he avers he consulted in the preparation of his work. Most of these sources relate to Mormonism, rather than Utah per se.

² This collection is particularly rich in rare early publications of the Church and in first editions. The Library Bulletin of March, 1909, is useful as a working bibliography.

The very mass of available source material, most of it polemic, much of it caustic, renders evaluation difficult. Very few scientific works on Mormonism have been written. Only one of these, Linn's The Story of the Mormons, attempts to cover the whole subject. Even this work is out of date (first printed 1902), loosely organized and incomplete.

Relative to the origin of the Book of Mormon, the Spaulding-Rigdon theory is based upon affidavits and statements first published in Howe's Mormonism Unveiled in 1834. Since that time, this reputed origin has been accepted by nearly all non-Mormon writers.³ Charles A. Shook's The True Origin of the Book of Mormon⁴ reprints this and other source material more fully than others. In addition, Shook gives valuable new material. Consequently, reference has usually been given to this book for this matter.

³ There have been three major exceptions: Davis H. Bays, The Doctrines and Dogmas of Mormonism (St. Louis: Christian Publishing Company, 1897), 459 pp.; I. Woodbridge Riley, The Founder of Mormonism (New York: Dodd, Mead & Company, 1902), 446 pp.; and W. F. Prince, "Psychological Tests for the Authorship of the Book of Mormon," American Journal of Psychology, XXVIII, 373-89.

⁴ Charles A. Shook, The True Origin of the Book of Mormon (Cincinnati: The Standard Publishing Company, 1914), 187 pp. Shook has written two other invaluable books which also are carefully documented: The True Origin of Mormon Polygamy (Cincinnati: The Standard Publishing Company, 1914), 213 pp.; and, Cumorah Revisited (Cincinnati: The Standard Publishing Company, 1910), 589 pp. The latter gives an exhaustive treatment of the Book of Mormon in the light of American archaeology and ethnology.

The latest objective examination of Mormonism appears in Arbaugh's Revelation in Mormonism. This book is admirably scientific in its treatment. For a critical statement of the general sources reference should be made to Linn's Preface. A selected list of material used by the present writer will be found in the Bibliography.

While this paper was in preparation, the first objective biography of Joseph Smith has appeared.⁵ Mrs. Brodie's book is an exhaustive, critical study of not only the previously available data, but of much new source material which she uncovered. The book is a major contribution to the study of Smith, the first scientific study of the prophet's whole career.

A word needs to be added here regarding the use of background material. Arbaugh well says:

Mormonism is today laying great stress on its cosmic and anthropological philosophy, pressing doctrine on the basis of its own appeal, and passing quickly over the origin of the doctrine. To know Mormonism one must know the origin of its ideas and attitudes. In fact, such knowledge is itself a judgement, and the present tendency in Mormonism makes such knowledge essential. The fact that Mormonism is fantastic, interesting, and available for study as no other religion is, makes its study a pleasant task.⁶

⁵ Fawn N. Brodie, No Man Knows My History (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1946), 476 plus ix pp. Mrs. Brodie was excommunicated after the publication of the book.

⁶ George B. Arbaugh, Revelation in Mormonism (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1932), p. v.

It is well that the task is pleasant, for it is difficult to winnow the wheat from the chaff--pro or con.

In so far as the literature of the Disciples is concerned, the task was to examine the beliefs and practices of this group as they existed prior to and at the time of the genesis of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints. Happily, the Library of George Pepperdine College is rich in first editions, periodicals, and rare publications of Alexander Campbell, Barton W. Stone, Walter Scott, and the many others who collaborated with, or prepared the way for them.

The term "Mormon" is used throughout this paper, because it is inoffensive to Mormons and is self-used, while the full title is too cumbersome for constant appearance. More difficulty is found with regard to the other group involved in this treatment. The term "Campbellites" is obnoxious to the body so denominated. Both "Church of Christ" and "The Restoration Movement" are unsatisfactory as they involve terms occurring in Mormon literature and hence are ambiguous. "Disciples of Christ" appears to be the most practicable expression. As used here, that term applies to Alexander Campbell and his associates during the first half of the nineteenth century.

It is not to be inferred from the treatment in this thesis that Joseph Smith made little or no contribution to Mormonism. Such a conclusion would be untenable. As Smith gained in self-confidence, he increasingly exercised his growing and undoubted talents. Mormons themselves have obscured his ability, by an over-emphasis upon his lack of education.

However, this paper is concerned with the contribution of Sidney Rigdon. As may be noted from the citations, it has long been suspected that Rigdon was an important factor in the genesis of Mormonism. Superficial resemblances between the theology of the Mormons and of the Disciples have frequently been discussed by others. For pointing these out, the writer can claim no originality. Whatever contribution has been made, will chiefly be found in the demonstration of certain unique parallels, which, it is believed, have not been thus treated elsewhere. See especially, pages 62-70, and chapters VI and VII.

For convenience, the following abbreviations are used for standard material, to which reference is frequently made:

- B. M., Book of Mormon
- C. B., The Christian Baptist
- D. C., Doctrines and Covenants
- I. V., Inspired Version
- M. H., The Millennial Harbinger

CHAPTER I

JOSEPH SMITH AND THE BOOK OF MORMON

Early in 1830, at the little village of Palmyra, New York, was published a small volume with the unprepossessing title, The Book of Mormon.¹ As early as the fall of 1827, Joseph Smith had announced that in obedience to the direction of an angel, he had dug up a book written upon gold plates, wherein was revealed not only an account of a race which formerly inhabited this continent, but the "fulness of the everlasting gospel" which was to replace the existing beliefs. Nevertheless the "Golden Bible" did not sell well, even at \$1.25 a volume.² Yet from this

¹ Egbert B. Grandin, publisher of the Wayne Sentinel at Palmyra, was first approached by Joseph Smith, his brother Hyrum, Oliver Cowdery and Martin Harris and was asked for an estimate of the cost of printing an edition of three thousand copies. Harris, a prosperous farmer, was to be security for the payment. Grandin thought the scheme was fraudulent and attempted to dissuade Harris from backing it. Thurlow Reed, publisher of the Anti-Masonic Inquirer at Rochester, New York, was next sought. After reading a few chapters, he refused to do the work, and likewise tried to discourage Harris. At length, Elihu F. Marshall, another Rochester publisher, made a specific bid. Armed with this, the group returned to Grandin. Citing the convenience to them of having the work done at home, and showing that the book would be printed anyway, they gained his assent. A contract was made to print and bind five thousand copies for the sum of \$3000, with Harris' farm as security. Pomeroy Tucker, Origin, Rise and Progress of Mormonism, (New York: 1867), p. 62f.

² Today, first editions bring from forty to fifty dollars.

inauspicious beginning there sprang one of the two distinctive religions indigenous to America, one which was to be a major item of national interest for several decades, and which today has a large and growing membership.³ The following story summarizes the account which Joseph Smith himself gave concerning the origin of the book.⁴

EARLY EXPERIENCES OF SMITH

Joseph Smith was born December 23, 1805, at Sharon, Vermont. When he was ten years of age, his parents moved to Palmyra, New York, and four years later, to Manchester, in the same county. Soon afterward, the community became greatly excited over religion.⁵ Joseph was strongly affected by the local tumult and leaned favorably toward the

³ According to the United States Government Census of Religious Bodies (1936), the Mormons had a membership of 889,250 and stood eleventh in rank among religious bodies.

⁴ This "autobiography" started as a supplement to Volume XIV of the Millennial Star and continued through successive volumes to Volume XXIV. The earlier part was "edited" by Sidney Rigdon. After a temporary defection of Rigdon, Smith continued the story in the form of a diary. The differences between the earlier and later accounts are illuminating.

⁵ Part, of course, of the "Second Awakening" which led to the Great Revival of the West and Southwest.

Methodists, but most of his family being Presbyterians, he was torn by indecision.

While in this mental conflict, he happened to read the scripture, "If any of you lack wisdom, let him ask of God, that giveth to all men liberally, and upbraideth not; and it shall be given him."⁶ The passage struck him with force, till he finally concluded he should use it as a formula to resolve his own difficulties.

Accordingly, on a beautiful day in the spring of 1820, he retired to the woods, and for the first time in his life, prayed vocally. He had scarcely begun, when,

. . . immediately I was seized upon by some power which entirely overcame me, and had such an astonishing influence over me as to bind my tongue so that I could not speak. Thick darkness gathered around me, and it seemed to me for a time as if I were doomed to a sudden destruction.⁷

Just when he was about to despair of freeing himself from the control of "some actual being from the unseen world," a shaft of dazzling light appeared above his head and gradually descended upon him. Immediately, he was

⁶ James 1:5.

⁷ A psychologist says: "The visions, as they stand, furnish evidences of epilepsy. . . . The psychiatric definition of the epileptic fits the prophet to a dot." I. Woodbridge Riley, The Founder of Mormonism (New York: Dodd, Mead & Company, 1902), p. 72f; Cf. pp. 39-76, 345-366 for a detailed psychological study of the visions and epileptic symptoms. Riley based his book on the assumption that Smith really had the visions.

released and saw two indescribably glorious personages in the air. One pointed to the other, saying, "This is my Beloved Son, hear Him."

Remembering the purpose of his prayer, Joseph asked which sect he should join, but was warned to join none of them for all of them were wrong. When he came to himself again, he found he was lying on his back, gazing upward.

For the next three and one-half years, nothing of moment happened except the "severe persecution at the hands of all classes of men, both religious and irreligious," to whom he told the story of the vision. However, denied the help of church affiliation, yet having the curiosity and gregariousness of adolescence, he "frequently fell into many foolish errors," which led him into "divers temptations, offensive in the sight of God."⁸

MORONI VISITS SMITH

Feeling condemned for these "imperfections," after getting into bed on the night of September 21, 1823, he prayed to God for forgiveness of his sins and another

⁸ "Martin Harris one time said that, 'Brother Joseph drank too much liquor while translating the Book of Mormon'; upon pressure from the church council, he modified this charge to the assertion that 'this thing occurred previously to the translating.'" Times and Seasons, VI, 992, quoted in Riley, op. cit., p. 66. It is doubtful whether Harris knew much about Joseph prior to the translation period.

manifestation of Himself. Whereupon, a brilliant light filled the room and a personage stood in the air, beside the bed.

Calling Joseph by name, and stating that his own name was Moroni, the presence declared that God had a work for Joseph to do. He asserted that a hidden book, written upon gold plates, told of the former inhabitants of this continent. In it, would be found "the fulness of the everlasting Gospel" which the Savior had preached to these people. Besides this, two stones in silver bows, called Urim and Thummim, would enable their possessor to translate the book.

The presence began quoting scripture, notably from the fourth chapter of Malachi, but as Joseph notes, with significant changes from the Authorized Version:

For behold, the day cometh that shall burn as an oven, and all the proud, yea, and all that do wickedly, shall burn as stubble; for they that come shall burn them saith the Lord of Hosts, that it shall leave them neither root nor branch.⁹

Behold I will reveal unto you the Priesthood, by the hand of Elijah the Prophet, before the coming of the great and dreadful day of the Lord.¹⁰

⁹ Mal. 4:1. The A. V. reads (*italics mine*): ". . . shall be stubble: and the day that cometh shall burn them up. . ." Considering that Joseph had read the Bible but little and confessedly was at this stage barely literate, his recognition and memory of the variations in this and the following verses, are remarkable, to say the least.

¹⁰ Mal. 4:5. A. V.: "Behold I will send you Elijah the prophet. . ."

And he shall plant in the hearts of the children the promises made to the fathers, and the hearts of the children shall turn to their fathers; if it were not so, the whole earth would be utterly wasted at his coming.¹¹

The messenger warned Joseph that he would be destroyed if he exhibited the plates or the Irum and Thummim to anyone other than those to whom he should be commanded to show them. Thereafter, Moroni disappeared up "a conduit open right up into heaven" and the room resumed its darkness.

While Joseph was meditating, the messenger appeared a second time, and recounted the previous words verbatim, with the additional information that great desolations by famine, sword, and pestilence would be visited upon that generation.

Still later, a third visit was made, adding a caution that he would be tempted to secure the plates for the purpose of getting rich. After the third ascension, Joseph heard the cock crow and realized it was daybreak.

He found himself too exhausted to perform his labors that day, so started home. When he tried to cross the fence, he fell to the ground and lay unconscious.

¹¹ Mal. 4:6. A. V.: "And he shall turn the heart of the fathers to the children, and the heart of the children to their fathers, lest I come and smite the earth with a curse." Oddly enough although in some other passages the "Inspired Translation" of Joseph Smith makes arbitrary changes to agree with revelations to him, in these verses the reading is the same as the A. V. For a more extended examination of Smith's version, see chapter VII, below.

In obedience to the instruction of Moroni, Joseph repaired to a hill near Manchester and, not far from the top, with a lever uncovered a stone box, the top of which was partially visible above the ground.¹² Within the box, were the plates, the Urim and Thummim, and an ancient breastplate.¹³

The messenger forbade the removal of the articles, at the same time instructing him to return to the spot annually for four years. He did as he was told, finally acquiring the plates on September 22, 1827. He was admonished to guard them carefully.

THE BEGINNING OF THE CHURCH

As soon as it was known that he had the plates, strenuous efforts were made to take them from

¹² In the early part of 1811, Joseph Smith, Senior's "mind became much excited upon the subject of religion." In a vision, he saw a box, but when he raised the lid, "all manner of beasts . . . rose up on every side in the most threatening manner." He dropped the box and fled for his life. Lucy Mack Smith, Biographical Sketches of Joseph Smith the Prophet, and his Progenitors for Many Generations, (Plano, Illinois: The Reorganized Church of Jesus Christ, L. D. S., 1880), p. 59f. Lucy Smith was the prophet's mother.

¹³ In another account, Joseph declared that the box also contained the sword of Laban and Lehi's "miraculous directors" (a sort of combination crystal ball and compass). Cf. Doctrines and Covenants, (Salt Lake City: L. D. S., 1923), 17:1. His mother alleged that she saw the breastplate "wrapped in a thin muslin handkerchief, so thin that I could see the glistening metal." She adds that the plate was worth "at least five hundred dollars." Lucy Smith, op. cit., p. 113f.

him.¹⁴ Rumor, falsehood and persecution became so intolerable that he and his wife fled to Harmony, in northeastern Pennsylvania.¹⁵

Immediately he began copying the characters off the plates, translating some of them by means of the Urim and Thummim. In April, 1829, Oliver Cowdery, a schoolteacher who had boarded at the home of Smith Senior during Joseph's absence, came to make inquiries. Two days later the Book

¹⁴ His mother relates that on the way home, for greater safety, he left the road and went through the woods. "As he was jumping over a log, a man sprang up from behind it, and gave him a heavy blow with a gun. Joseph turned around and knocked him down, then ran at the top of his speed. About half a mile farther he was attacked again in the same manner as before; he knocked this man down in like manner as the former, then ran on again; and before he reached home he was assaulted the third time. [He came home] speechless from fright and the fatigue of running." Lucy Smith, op. cit., p. 111. Italics mine. Presumably, Joseph had the plates under his arm all of this time. Estimates of the weight of the plates range from fifty to two hundred pounds.

¹⁵ In January of that year (1827), he married Emma Hale, at Harmony, Susquehanna County, Pennsylvania. He had boarded at her father's home, while employed by one Josiah Stool (or Stowel) to dig for a lost Spanish silver mine. Mather Smith's history states that Stool "came for Joseph on account of having heard that he possessed certain keys, by which he could discern things invisible to the natural eye." In a footnote, the reprint by the Reorganized Church defends divining rods. The Utah edition ("carefully revised and checked for accuracy"), substitutes "means" for "keys," but wisely refrains from comment. Cf. Lucy Smith, op. cit., p. 96; Lucy Mack Smith, History of Joseph Smith, (Salt Lake City: Stevens & Wallis, 1924), p. 91f.

of Mormon began to take form, Joseph translating, and Cowdery transcribing.¹⁶

Sometime during the ensuing month, John the Baptist appeared to Smith and Cowdery, and laying his hands upon them, conferred the Priesthood of Aaron. In obedience to the command of John, each baptised the other. Suddenly, the Holy Ghost fell upon them, enlightening their minds so that they might understand even the most mysterious passages of scriptures.

While the book was in the hands of the printers, a meeting was held for the purpose of organizing the Church. Accordingly, on April 6, 1830, the "Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints," composed of six members, Joseph Smith, Hyrum Smith, Samuel H. Smith, Oliver Cowdery, Peter Whitmer, and David Whitmer, had its formal beginning.¹⁷

¹⁶ Due to the loss of 116 pages, there was a ten months lapse in the work of translation. Cf. George B. Arbaugh, Revelation in Mormonism (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1932), p. 23, 39f, 117; Lucy Smith, History of Joseph Smith, p. 124-136.

¹⁷ Hyrum Smith and Samuel H. Smith were brothers of Joseph. Joseph had lived, board free, at the home of Peter Whitmer since June, 1829. David Whitmer was a son of Peter. David later declared that this was only a legal organization, that three branches were in existence, at Fayette, New York, at Manchester, New York, and at Colesville, Pennsylvania. He states they had been baptizing and confirming members for eight months; that several who had been baptized were confirmed on that day. Cf. David Whitmer, An Address to All Believers in Christ, (Richmond, Missouri: Elder David Whitmer, 1887), p. 33.

Thus ends Smith's account of the beginnings of Mormonism.¹⁸

The title page of the first edition of the Book of Mormon bears the inscription, The Book of Mormon; An account written by the hand of Mormon, upon plates taken from the plates of Nephi. Underneath the wordy description common to books of the time, appears the words, "By Joseph Smith, Junior, author and proprietor." Present-day editions substitute for the latter, "Translated by Joseph Smith, Junior."

The first edition contains 588 duodecimo pages, and in biblical semblance, is divided into fifteen books. Later, Orson Pratt divided the chapters into verses, as well as providing marginal references.

SUMMARY OF THE BOOK OF MORMON

Purportedly, the history was written on metallic plates, and handed down from one writer to another. The earliest account chronologically is found in the Book of Ether, which stands fourteenth in order. Shortly after the confusion of tongues,¹⁹ God commands the brother of

¹⁸ I have followed the narrative which is used for missionary purposes by the Utah church, a 24 page booklet entitled: Joseph Smith Tells His Own Story.

¹⁹ Gen. 11:1-9. Jared, his brother [sic many times], and their friends, were spared from the confusion that affected all others. Cf. B. M., Ether 1:34-37.

Jared [sic] to embark, with a party of thirty or more, in eight peculiarly constructed arks in which they drifted across the Atlantic. After 344 days, they landed on the coast of North America. Their highly civilized descendants spread over most of the continent, eventually splitting into two warring nations. Fifteen hundred years after the landing, their enmity culminated in a terrible war of extermination, involving well-equipped armies of two million soldiers each. With the exception of one man, both nations were annihilated.

At about the time of this war, in the reign of Zedekiah, King of Judah,²⁰ the families of Lehi and Ishmael left Jerusalem, and after wandering in the Arabian Desert for eight years, embarked in another oddly-built ship, finally landing upon the west coast of South America. The two families intermarried and multiplied rapidly. Like their predecessors, they divided into two rival groups, called respectively Nephites and Lamanites.

About one year after their arrival in South America, a third party, led by a son of King Zedekiah, left Jerusalem, landing somewhere near the Isthmus of Panama. Four hundred years later, a wandering party of Nephites discovered them, and eventually, the two nations became one. The Nephites

²⁰ 2 Kings 24:17f.

moved northward until they covered most of North America, while the Lamanites spread out over all of South America.

Except for the Book of Ether, mentioned above, the Book of Mormon purports to be the history of these last two peoples. The Lamanites, given "a skin of blackness";²¹ became the ancestors of the American Indians.

Jesus the Christ appeared to them in person a few days after his resurrection, and for forty days, preached, performed astounding miracles,²² extended blessings far greater than Israel ever enjoyed, and even ordained twelve apostles. Soon the entire populace of North and South America were converted and a two hundred year "millennium" ensued. Nevertheless, history repeated itself and, with prosperity, many apostatized.

These apostates revived the name Lamanites and at length became so powerful that they completely destroyed all of the righteous. Only the barbarous infidels remained to be discovered by Columbus et al.

²¹ 2 Nephi 5:21. Many present-day Mormons suggest the possibility that other ethnic groups may have migrated later via the Bering Strait.

²² "So great faith have I never seen among all the Jews; wherefore I could not show unto them so great miracles, because of their unbelief. Verily I say unto you, there are none of them that have seen so great things as ye have seen; neither have they heard so great things as ye have heard." 3 Nephi 19:35b, 36.

Howbeit, the prophet Mormon, who was commander in chief of the Nephite forces, was able to collect all the sacred records, then carefully abridging them, engraved them upon golden plates. These he gave to his son Moroni, who brought them down to date, then hid them in the hill Cumorah, near Palmyra, New York. Fourteen hundred years later, this same Moroni appeared to Joseph Smith, to direct him to the finding and translation of the plates.

The Book of Mormon abounds with amazing miracles, prophecies which are remarkably fulfilled, astounding conversions, strange visions, and a multitude of sermons. Yet so strange is the human heart, that the publication of the book found the people of New York mostly indifferent,²³ a few hostile, hardly any of them believers.

Smith began to learn that the way of a prophet, like that of a transgressor, is hard. Without the consolation of honor from without, he experienced the penalty of being "without honor" in his own house. His father-in-law and entire family turned against him to the point that "they would no longer promise us protection nor believe

²³ Mormon and non-Mormon historians differ widely on this point. Smith claimed that the community was tremendously stirred even before the book appeared in print and that strenuous efforts to steal the plates were made. Cf. footnote 14, p. 8 above; Lucy Smith, op. cit., p. 108. Non-Mormon writers think otherwise. Cf. Arbaugh, op. cit., p. 35f.

our doctrines."²⁴ Opportunely, Emma received a revelation through Joseph, reassuring her that, "Thou needest not fear, for thy husband shall support thee in the church," promising that "it shall be given thee, to make a selection of sacred hymns . . . to be had in my church," but cautioning her to "continue in the spirit of meekness, and beware of pride. Let thy soul delight in thy husband, and the glory which shall come upon him."²⁵

SIDNEY RIGDON CONVERTED

Among the small band of converts was one Parley P. Pratt, a tin peddler and lay preacher to rural Ohio congregations, lately associated with the Disciples. On a trip to New York State, he was shown a copy of the Mormon Bible and immediately accepted it. Straightway he received a commission to proclaim the new Gospel, and, together with Cowdery, Peter Whitmer, Jr., and Z. Peterson, travelled directly to Mentor, Ohio, where they stayed a week in the home of Sidney Rigdon.²⁶ Rigdon had been a powerful Baptist preacher, who after some conversations with Alexander

²⁴ Joseph Smith and Heaman C. Smith, History of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints (Lamoni, Iowa: Reorganized Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints, 1908), p. 117.

²⁵ D. C. 25:9, 11, 14.

²⁶ Rigdon had previously converted Pratt to become a Disciple.

Campbell, turned to the Disciples together with the whole congregation for which he preached.

In the autobiography of Smith it is related that Rigdon's guests showed him the Book of Mormon, describing it in these words:

This being the first time he had ever heard of or seen the Book of Mormon, he felt very much prejudiced at the assertion [that it was a revelation], and replied that "he had one Bible which he believed was a revelation from God, and with which he pretended to have some acquaintance; but with respect to the book they had presented him, he must say he had considerable doubt." Upon which, they expressed a desire to investigate the subject and argue the matter; but he replied, "No, young gentlemen, you must not argue with me on the subject. But I will read your book, and see what claim it has upon my faith, and will endeavor to ascertain whether it be a revelation from God or not." After some further conversation on the subject, they expressed a desire to lay the subject before the people, and requested the privilege of preaching in Elder Rigdon's church, to which he readily consented. The appointment was accordingly published, and a large and respectable congregation assembled. Oliver Cowdery and Parley P. Pratt severally addressed the meeting. At the conclusion Elder Rigdon arose and stated to the congregation that the information they that evening had received was of an extraordinary character, and certainly demanded their most serious consideration; and, as the apostle advised his brethren 'to prove all things and hold fast that which is good,' so he would exhort his brethren to do likewise, and give the matter a careful investigation, and not turn against it, without being fully convinced of its being an imposition, lest they should possibly resist the truth.²⁷

²⁷ Millennial Star, Vol. XIV, p. 47, Italics mine. The account is probably from the pen of Rigdon.

THE "COMPILING GENIUS OF MORMONISM"

Two days later Rigdon had another visitor, an angel, and on the following Sunday, he and his wife were baptized into the new faith. In the words of a Mormon writer:

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.²⁸

To all of which this present writer would readily agree, with further additions. It will be the purpose of this paper to show that far from being a credulous convert to Mormonism, that Rigdon had foreknowledge of the book prior to its publication, if he did not actually have a hand in its composition, and that the theology of early Mormonism was the theology of Rigdon, not Smith. "The voice is Jacob's voice, but the hands are the hands of Esau."²⁹

²⁸ Daryl Chase, Sidney Rigdon - Early Mormon. Unpublished M. A. thesis, University of Chicago, 1931, p. 73.

²⁹ Gen. 27:22.

Even if Rigdon had no part in the writing of the Mormon Bible, he had more to do with the organization and doctrines of Mormonism than did Joseph Smith. At the time of Rigdon's conversion, the church had been in existence barely eight months, and had less than one hundred members. The church was only loosely organized, with much of its theology to be announced as the occasion required. Other than the Book of Mormon, not a solitary book or even pamphlet had been published.

With the exception of a few weeks, from the second day after he met Smith, until the day of Joseph's death, Rigdon was his official "spokesman."³⁰ For a period of thirteen years he was this and more. More than twenty-five years later an ex-Mormon elder wrote:

The compiling genius of Mormonism was Sidney Rigdon. Smith had boisterous impetuosity but no foresight. Polygamy was not the result of his policy but of his passions. Sidney gave point, direction, and apparent consistency to the Mormon system of theology. He invented its forms and the manner of its arguments. . . . Had it not been for the accession of these two men [Rigdon and Parley P. Pratt], Smith would have been lost, and his schemes frustrated and abandoned.³¹

³⁰ Since it affects the question of succession, Mormons consider it important that shortly before his death, Smith broke with Rigdon.

³¹ John Hyde, Jr., Mormonism: Its Leaders and Designs (New York: W. P. Pettridge & Company, 1857), quoted in Linn, op. cit., p. 59. Linn does not give the page reference and I have failed to find the quotation.

A statement of Whitmer is even more significant,
when he says:

Sidney Rigdon was the cause of almost all the errors which were introduced while he was in the church. . . . 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 doctrine and that doctrine, and of course a revelation would always come just as they desired it.³²

³² Whitmer, op. cit., p. 35. Italics mine. Whitmer specifies this date and subject in an argument against the priesthood, which was introduced in 1831. It is the opinion of the present writer that this statement can be given a much broader application than to doctrines which Whitmer considered errors.

CHAPTER II

SIDNEY RIGDON--BAPTIST AND DISCIPLE

The names of Joseph Smith, the "founder," and Brigham Young, the organizer of Mormonism, are known to all--Mormon and non-Mormon alike. But except for special students, few gentiles¹ are familiar with even the name of one who was a member of the famous First Presidency,² who indisputably was the right-hand man of Smith for thirteen years, who on the ticket with Smith, was nominated for vice-president of the United States, and who not only everywhere left his mark upon the theology and organization of Mormonism, but as this paper will attempt to show, was Mormonism's guiding genius. Even among Mormons,

¹ Mormons constantly use this term in reference to all non-Mormons.

² The others were Smith and one F. G. Williams, who in 1839 was excommunicated. In 1840, he was restored to fellowship. He made little impress upon the church, apparently being selected to complete the resemblance to the trinity. The History of the Church devotes only about a page to his biography, stating that after his restoration, "he practically dropped out of active life. . . . There has been but little recorded concerning him, and so we will not venture to give particulars." (p. 641f.). He was so unimportant that this official biography errs in giving the dates of his expulsion and rebaptism. Smith said that "[He] seeks with all his heart to magnify his presidency in the Church of Christ, but fails in many instances, in consequence of a want of confidence in himself." ibid., p. 641.

the later apostasy of Rigdon has largely prevented a recognition of the extent of his influence upon the church.³

To this day, no biography of Rigdon has been published. His son wrote a partial biography, which, in manuscript form, reposes in the archives of the church at Salt Lake City. The greater part of this manuscript has been used in the church histories. In 1931, an unpublished thesis gave a fuller account of his life than had hitherto been available.⁴ Figures of lesser importance are far better known. A biography of Sidney Rigdon should be written.

Joseph Smith seems a very live figure and Brigham Young even more so. But the things written about Rigdon do not bring him very close to us. He seems as colorless as the basrelief of some Assyrian monarch.

³ This is particularly true of Mormon writers, conscious of the problems, rather than of the rank and file.

⁴ Daryl Chase, "Sidney Rigdon---Early Mormon," unpublished M. A. Thesis, University of Chicago, 1931. The thesis is a painstaking study, the best available source at present, for details of Rigdon's life. Although Chase later came into the employ of the Utah church, as a member of the college Institute staff of the Department of Education, his subsequent actions have clearly demonstrated his independence of judgment. He has been credited as being the greatest living authority on the life of Joseph Smith. It is the writer's opinion that Chase's intense admiration for Smith has made the thesis an apologetic for the latter, rather than a sympathetic treatment of the contributions of Rigdon to Mormonism.

Yet he could not have been lacking in what today is called "personality." Associated successively with Baptists, Disciples, and Mormons, he was a leader among each. His influence was sufficient to turn an entire congregation almost overnight from Baptist to Disciple.⁵ One who was not a great admirer, declared that his native eloquence was unsurpassed among the group of early Mormons.⁶

The reasons for the paucity of source material are not hard to find. Most of Rigdon's writing was done in other guises than under his own name.⁷ The oratory which inflamed his followers, has long ago been buried in the graves of his listeners. He kept no journal or diary. Surrounded in his declining years by those who curiously prodded him for the "true story" of Mormonism, he grew more and more close-mouthed, and died an embittered man.⁸

⁵ He failed to repeat this performance, in changing from Disciple to Mormon.

⁶ Chase, op. cit.

⁷ Chase's claim that Rigdon was a public speaker, not a writer, will not bear analysis.

⁸ After his death, in 1876 at Friendship, Allegheny County, New York, the Standard of that city, said of him, "citizen, stranger, and persistent reporter all alike failed in eliciting any information. . . 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." Quoted in W. A. Linn, The Story of the Mormons (New York: The MacMillan Company, 1923), p. 319, f.

Added to his own reticence is the fact that three different churches still consider him an apostate. Hence there was little incentive for the historical student to do the careful work of research. Most of the material extant was written by those who abhorred him. The biographer of Rigdon will have a difficult task.

EARLY LIFE OF RIGDON

The name Rigdon is seldom met with today. Apparently few persons of that name came from Europe and the family or families that did emigrate were not prolific. Sidney was the youngest son of William and Nancy Rigdon. His ancestry on the paternal side was English, on the maternal, Scotch and Irish. After the American Revolution, the family settled at Piney Fork, Peter's Creek, St. Clair Township, Alleghany County, Pennsylvania. There, on February 19, 1793, was born their third son, the only one known to fame.

Little is known of his youth except that he received a "common English education." When Sidney was seventeen his father died. Sidney remained on the farm until he was twenty-six. This farm was located some fifteen miles south of Pittsburg. While a boy, he was thrown from a horse and with his foot caught in the stirrup, was dragged a considerable distance. It is possible that he sustained

a brain contusion, which perhaps had some effect upon his mental stability.

At the age of twenty-four he joined the Regular Baptists and a year or so later decided to preach. Accordingly, he left the farm to reside at the home of the Reverend Andrew Clark, a Baptist minister, in Beaver County. During the winter of 1818-19 he was granted a license to preach.

The following spring, he moved to Warren, Trumbull County, Ohio, to reside with a more noted Baptist preacher, Adamson Bentley. A few months later he was ordained. On June 12, 1820, he married Phoebe Brooks, sister-in-law of Bentley.

RIGDON: THE POPULAR PREACHER

In short order, Rigdon became a very popular preacher. His talents were somewhat above the average of frontier preachers of the time. Rigdon's lack of formal training was no handicap, for others had no more than he. The frontier Baptist preachers of the period had little taste and less opportunity for formal preparation for the ministry. In fact, there was considerable antagonism toward such.

The process of becoming a preacher was fairly simple. As Sweet describes it:

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 license 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.⁹

The typical Baptist preacher rose up from the community in which he preached. Nearly always he was a farmer, working all week and preaching on Sunday.

The effects of the Great Revival in the West had not completely subsided and neither preacher nor audience was likely to be calm for long. The meetings were frequently, "characterized by wildest excitement. This was the effect of the impassioned preaching, earnest exhortation, loud prayers, and energetic singing."¹⁰ Rigdon's preaching was not different in style than the others, but his "extraordinary native eloquence soon made his name well known."¹¹

⁹ William Warren Sweet, Religion on the American Frontier: The Baptists (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1931) p. 39.

¹⁰ Catherine C. Cleveland, The Great Revival in the West (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1916) p. 51.

¹¹ Erret Gates, The Early Relation and Separation of Baptists and Disciples (Chicago: The Christian Century Company, 1904) p. 61.

RIGDON INFLUENCED BY ALEXANDER CAMPBELL

At this period, Bentley and Rigdon heard with interest of the ideas being advanced by Alexander Campbell. Not waiting for Campbell to come to Ohio, they decided to visit him to see what they might learn. As Campbell himself described the visit:

In the summer of 1821, while sitting in my portico after dinner, two gentlemen in the costume of clergymen, as then 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.' On entering my house, and on being introduced to my family, after some refreshment, Elder Bentley said, 'Having just read your debate with Mr. John Walker¹² of our state of Ohio, with considerable interest, and having been deputed by the Mahoning Baptist Association last year to ordain some elders and to set some churches in order, which brought us within little more than a day's ride of you, we concluded to make a special visit, to inquire of you particularly on sundry matters of much interest to us set forth in the debate, and would be glad, when perfectly at your leisure, to have an opportunity to do so.' . . .

After tea, in the evening, we commenced, and prolonged our discourse until the next morning. . . . especially the ancient order of things . . . engaged our attention.

On parting the next day, Sidney Rigdon, with all apparent candor, said, if he had within the last year

¹² This was one of the several notable debates in which Campbell engaged. Walker, a Presbyterian minister, had challenged the Baptists to procure a champion who would debate with him. Campbell, at that time nominally a Baptist, was the obvious choice. The questions discussed were: the proper subjects of baptism, and the mode of baptism.

taught and promulgated from the pulpit one error, he had a thousand. At that time he was the great orator of the Mahoning 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 builded 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.¹³

In 1822, Rigdon was called to the pastorate of the Baptist church in Pittsburg, at that period a small city. However, the position carried considerably more prestige than in the village of Warren. His "peculiar style of preaching" included not only an appeal to the "ancient order of things," but also, communism, divine healings, speaking in tongues, visions, revelations, and sundry other items.¹⁴ These latter he may have picked up from a community of Shakers in Warren County. He more than intimated that the doctrines popular with the Baptists were not altogether in harmony with the scriptures.

These things alarmed the brethren. Accordingly, at the annual meeting of the Association in 1824 he was

¹³ Millennial Harbinger, 1848, p. 523.

¹⁴ "Rigdon was a firm believer in revelations and visions. He claimed to have had supernatural experiences before he met the prophet. The revelation which is still considered by Mormons to be outstanding, was given jointly to Rigdon and the Prophet. After leaving the Mormon group he still claimed to hear God's voice and enjoy the visitation of angels." Chase, op. cit., p. 203.

tried, but withdrew before the termination of the trial. For the next two years or so he remained in Pittsburg, supporting by manual labor his wife and three children.

However, some of the brethren liked his "peculiar preachings," so permission was obtained to hold a meeting in the court house. Here though still, like Campbell, a Baptist, he unreservedly proclaimed the doctrines which were "in accordance with the scriptures."

Alexander Campbell had never been a whole-hearted Baptist, but had joined them as a matter of expediency. Distressed by "diverse and opposite extremes and absurdities" of religionists, he fondly believed that by preaching the "ancient order of things," he could persuade men to abandon their various sects and unite upon the common ground they held.¹⁵

It was perfectly in harmony with his principles to use his influence toward the appointment of Rigdon to the Pittsburg church. Under the masterful direction of Campbell, Rigdon, Bentley and Walter Scott, did their work so well that "the majority of the Baptist churches of the Western Reserve¹⁶ were permeated with the new teaching."¹⁷

¹⁵ See Chapters III and IV below, for a more extended discussion.

¹⁶ A tract of about 3,500,000 acres near Lake Erie, reserved by the State of Connecticut at the time of the cession of the Northwest Territory to the United States. It is now the northeastern corner of the State of Ohio.

¹⁷ Gates, op. cit., p. 93.

THE ANCIENT ORDER OF THINGS

The church at Brush Run, Pennsylvania, was the first whole congregation to accept the "ancient order of things" as a guide for its faith and practice. This body was formed of members of various denominations, who at their union fellowshipped with Baptist churches. The second and third were at Wellsburg, Pennsylvania, and Pittsburg. The latter was formed by a union of the church presided over by Walter Scott and the Baptist church in charge of Rigdon, in 1824.

Entire associations were permeated by the teachings of those who at first called their work a "reformation," but later referred to it as a "restoration of primitive Christianity." The movement was not confined to Baptists, for the ranks were swelled by defections from all the denominations. At Deerfield, Ohio, the entire Methodist church came over to the "ancient order of things."¹⁸

However, Campbell was over-optimistic in his belief that the entire body of Baptists would lead the way toward unity. Divisions arose in local churches and spread to Associations. In 1829, the Beaver Association, of Pennsylvania,

¹⁸ A. S. Hayden, Early History of the Disciples in the Western Reserve (Cincinnati: Chase & Hall, 1875), p. 311 ff.

adopted a series of resolutions against the Reformers.¹⁹ Encouraged by this action, other associations withdrew fellowship from churches accepting the errors and corruptions of Campbell and his associates. In many cases the true Baptist churches were in the minority and it became a matter of self-preservation. In April 1830, the majority of the churches of North District Association were excluded by the minority.²⁰ In September of the same year the Boone's Creek Association eliminated six out of thirteen churches.²¹

THE EMERGENCE OF THE DISCIPLES

The year 1830 marks the turning point in the relations between Baptists and Reformers. In that year, ten Associations took some sort of Action, leading to exclusion or anathematization of the latter.²² Although as late as 1831, Thomas Campbell (father of Alexander) was received into many Baptist pulpits, the end was at hand and the Reformers bowed to the inevitable. On a trip to the East

¹⁹ Robert Richardson, Memoirs of Alexander Campbell (Cincinnati: Standard Publishing Company, 1897) II, 322.

²⁰ Gates, op. cit., p. 93.

²¹ Ibid., p. 93.

²² Ibid., p. 101.

in 1832, Alexander Campbell "was refused all the Baptist meeting-houses in New York."²³

Since a separate entity necessitated an identifying name for the Reformers, various names were suggested and used at times. However, seeking one which bore no sectarian distinction, Campbell and those nearest him, preferred the name "Disciples of Christ." For convenience, this term will henceforth be used here.²⁴

Thus when in October, 1830, the Mormon missionaries visited Rigdon at Mentor, Ohio, the latter was preaching for a church of Disciples. However, less than three months previously he had had a passage at arms with Campbell. Rigdon who was "clearly the most fanatical and literal-minded of the Disciples of Christ"²⁵ argued that a community of goods should be set up as in the early Jerusalem church. Campbell, foreseeing the dangers of such a course, sternly corrected this "error" before a crowded meeting at Austintown, Ohio. On his way home, Rigdon bitterly stated that, "I have done as much in this reformation as Campbell or Scott and yet they get all the honor of it."²⁶

²³ Richardson, op. cit., II, 392.

²⁴ Cf. Chapter IV, below, for fuller discussion.

²⁵ Fawn N. Brodie, No Man Knows My History (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1946), p. 94.

²⁶ Hayden, op. cit., p. 299.

However, Rigdon did set up a small communistic colony in Kirtland. It was here that the missionaries were permitted to preach, not at Mentor. The few converts that Rigdon drew from the Disciples to the Mormons, were nearly all from the Kirtland group.

QUESTIONS REGARDING RIGDON'S CONVERSION

Several points need to be kept in mind relative to the "conversion" of Rigdon to Mormonism. First, Parley P. Pratt, who headed the embassy to Mentor was himself a disciple of Rigdon. Second, Pratt as a Disciple went on a mission to New York State, passed through Palmyra and became an easy convert of Smith's. Third, Pratt and the others started almost immediately on a mission to the "Lamanites" (Indians), but proceeded directly to Mentor, to call upon Rigdon. Fourth, Rigdon had prepared the people for something startling which was to happen.

Rigdon, with pompous pretense, was travelling with expectancy of some great event soon to be revealed to the surprise and astonishment of mankind. Gifted with very fine powers of mind, an imagination at once fertile, glowing and wild to extravagance, with temperament tinged with sadness and bordering upon credulity, he was prepared and preparing others for the voice of some mysterious event soon to come.²⁷

About three weeks after his conversion, Rigdon went to Palmyra to visit Smith, taking along Edward Partridge.

²⁷ Ibid., p. 209. Hayden wrote from first-hand knowledge.

There may be considerable significance in the fact that Partridge had made prior preparations.

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 probably that he was merely a pilgrim seeking the truth.²⁸

Partridge was a prosperous man, with cash in his pockets. Such a man was valuable. He became the first bishop in the church, while as for Rigdon, on December 7, 1830, two days after he arrived in Palmyra, he was honored by receiving a joint revelation with Smith.

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 greater work. 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 [Smith] which should come, and thou knewest it not. . . . Wherefore, watch over him [Smith] that his faith fail not. . . . thou shalt write for him. . . tarry with him, and he shall journey with you. . . and thou shalt preach my gospel and call on the holy prophets to prove his words.²⁹

Rigdon did tarry about two months, preaching and receiving revelations. His knowledge of the Bible was of immense help to the new cause. Nor was his experience with the Disciples any hindrance.

²⁸ Eva L. Pancoast, Mormons in Kirtland, unpublished M. A. Thesis, Western Reserve University, 1929, p. 22.

²⁹ D. C., 35: 3, 4, 19, 20, 22, 23. Italics mine.

When Rigdon entered the Mormon church he did not even 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 the gift of the Holy Ghost. 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 thousands 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: he could move 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.³⁰

Not only did Rigdon get "rid of the restraining hand of Campbell," but it must have been a happy coincidence for him that the very points in which Mormonism varied from Disciple theology were those which Rigdon had vainly tried to make a part of that theology.³¹ Perhaps the Disciples, too, had a large measure of comfort, for since the Mormon teachings were divinely authenticated, Disciples, too, had divine sanction for their beliefs--as far as they went.

CHRONOLOGY OF RIGDON'S KNOWN ACTIVITIES

In any study of the life of Rigdon, consideration must be given to the possibility of his relationship to the Spaulding theory. This interesting hypothesis will be

³⁰ Chase, op. cit., p. 37-8. Italics mine.

³¹ Cf. post, p. 125 f.

dealt with later in connection with a discussion of the origin of the Book of Mormon.³² For more than fifty years, Mormon writers have declared the theory "dead." Nevertheless, many scholarly writers continue to treat it as if it were alive.

To refute any possibility of Rigdon's participation in the Book of Mormon, the claim has been made that limitations of time were insuperable. On this point, Brodie asserts:

Rigdon's life between 1826 and 1829 has been carefully documented from non-Mormon sources. It is clear from the following chronology that he was a busy and successful preacher and one of the leading figures in the Campbellite movement in Ohio. Until August 1830, when he broke with Alexander Campbell over the question of introducing communism into the Campbellite Church, he was one of the four key men of that church.³³ It cannot be held that Rigdon rewrote the Spaulding manuscript before 1827, since the anti-Masonry permeating the book clearly stemmed from the Morgan excitement beginning late in 1826.³⁴

Elder E. L. Kelley, of the Reorganized Church prepared a list which covers the known movements of Rigdon from November 2, 1826, to November 14, 1830, *i. e.*, from

³² Cf. Post, p. 74 f.

³³ Mormons have greatly overrated Rigdon's importance among the Disciples. Rigdon assisted Adamson Bentley in preparing the Mahoning Association, but despite his fervid oratory, was secondary even in Ohio, to Bentley and Walter Scott. Due to his erratic nature Disciple leaders were dubious of him. Cf., Hayden, op. cit., p. 191.

³⁴ Brodie, op. cit., p. 430-1.

the beginning of the anti-Masonic excitement to Rigdon's conversion. The chronology follows:³⁵

YEAR	MONTH	DAY	EVENT
1826	Nov.	2	Marriage of Smith and Giles.
1826	Dec.	13	Above marriage recorded.
1827	Jan.	..	Held meeting at Mantau, O.
1827	Feb.	..	Funeral of Hannah Tanner, Chester, O. (Gap of about one month.)
1827	Mar.	..	Held meeting at Mentor, O.
1827	Apr.	..	Held meeting at Mentor, O. (Gap of possibly month and a half.)
1827	June	5	Marriage of Freeman and Waterman.
1827	June	7	Above marriage recorded.
1827	June	15	Baptized Thomas Clapp at Mentor, O.
1827	July	3	Marriage of Gray and Kerr.
1827	July	12	Above marriage recorded.
1827	July	19	Marriage of Snow and Parker.
1827	Aug.	10	Above marriage recorded.
1827	Aug.	23	Met with Ministerial Asso., New Lisbon, O. (Gap of one month and seventeen days.)
1827	Oct.	9	Marriage of Sherman and Mathews.
1827	Oct.	20	At Ministerial Council, Warren, O.
1827	Oct.	27	Marriage of Sherman and Mathews recorded.
1827	Nov.	..	Held meeting at New Lisbon, O.
1827	Dec.	6	Marriage of Wait and Gunn.
1827	Dec.	12	Above marriage recorded.
1827	Dec.	13	Marriage of Cottrell and Olds.
1828	Jan.	8	Above marriage recorded.
1828	Feb.	14	Marriage of Herrington and Corning.
1828	Mar.	31	Above marriage recorded.
1828	Mar.	..	Instructed theological class, Mentor, O.
1828	Apr.	..	Conducted revival at Kirtland, O.
1828	May	..	Met Campbell at Shalersville.
1828	June	..	Baptized H. H. Clapp, Mentor, O.

³⁵ A comparison of the list as given by Brodie, who completely rejects the Spaulding theory, and Shook, who is its ablest defender, shows the two lists to be identical. Cf., Brodie, op. cit., p. 431-2; Charles A. Shook, The True Origin of the Book of Mormon (Cincinnati, Ohio: The Standard Publishing Co., 1914), p. 138-146.

YEAR	MONTH	DAY	EVENT
			(Gap of possibly two months.)
1828	Aug.	..	At Association, Warren, O.
1828	Sept.	7	Marriage of Dille and Kent.
1828	Sept.	18	Marriage of Corning and Wilson.
1828	Oct.	13	Above marriage recorded.
			(Gap of two months and a half.)
1829	Jan.	1	Marriage of Churchill and Fosdick.
1829	Feb.	1	Marriage of Root and Tuttle.
1829	Feb.	12	Above marriages recorded.
1829	Mar.	..	Meeting at Mentor, O.
1829	Apr.	12	Meeting at Kirtland, O.
1829	May	..	Baptized Lyman Wight.
			(Gap of possibly one month and a half.)
1829	July	1	Organized church at Perry, O.
1829	Aug.	..	Baptized Mrs. Lyman Wight.
1829	Aug.	13	Marriage of Strong and More.
1829	Sept.	14	Above marriage recorded.
1829	Sept.	14	Marriage of Atwater and Clapp.
1829	Sept.	..	Held meeting at Mentor, Ohio.
1829	Oct.	1	Marriage of Roberts and Bates.
1829	Oct.	7	The last two marriages recorded.
1829	Oct.	..	At Perry, O.
1829	Nov.	..	Held meeting at Wait Hill, O.
1829	Dec.	31	Marriage of Chandler and Johnson.
1830	Jan.	12	Above marriage recorded.
			(Gap of possibly two months.)
1830	Mar.	..	At Mentor, O.
			(Gap of two months.)
1830	June	..	At Mentor, O.
1830	July	..	Held meeting at Pleasant Valley, O.
1830	Aug.	..	Met Campbell at Austintown, O.
			(Gap of easily two and a half months.)
1830	Nov.	4	Marriage of Wood and Cleaveland.
1830	Nov.	11	Above marriage recorded.
1830	Nov.	14	Rigdon baptized by Cowdery.

This list proves too much, for a comparison of the admitted gaps with declarations of Joseph Smith becomes highly interesting. An incident that could have occurred at the time of the first gap is dated by Joseph's mother as "not long subsequent to his return" from his marriage in Pennsylvania (January, 1827). He failed to return from a trip to nearby Manchester until late at night. Joseph explained that the delay was caused by,

. . . the angel of the Lord. As I passed by the hill of Cumorah, where the plates are, the angel met me and said that I had not been engaged enough in the work of the Lord; that the time had come for the record to be brought forth; and that I must be up and doing and set myself about the things which God had commanded me to do. But, father, give yourself no uneasiness . . . for I know the course that I am to pursue, so all will be well.³⁶

For the second gap, no suggestion is offered, but the third touches a vital date, for on September 22, 1827, Smith claims that the angelic messenger finally delivered the plates to him.³⁷ At this period, Rigdon's activities are unaccounted for in Ohio for a full month and a half.

One Lorenzo Saunders, who knew the Smith family intimately, declared that he saw Sidney Rigdon at the Smith

³⁶ Lucy Mack Smith, *History of Joseph Smith* (Salt Lake City, Utah: Stevens & Wallis, 1945), p. 100 f. Italics mine.

³⁷ Joseph Smith, *Joseph Smith's Own Story* (Independence, Missouri: Zion's Printing and Publishing Company, [n. d.], p. 12 f. In Mormon theology, angels are exalted men.

home in March, 1827, on the Palmyra road with Joseph, in the fall of 1827, and again in the summer of 1828.³⁸ If it is not significant, at least it is curious, that these dates can, without distortion, fit the first, third, and fourth gaps.

In the latter part of June, 1828, the wife of Martin Harris stole the first 116 pages of the manuscript of the Book of Mormon. For a time Smith was in despair, but in July, a revelation was received which resolved his difficulties.³⁹ If Smith and Rigdon were collaborating, it would have been essential for them to confer at this time. Here, there is a gap of two months in Rigdon's chronology. Although the revelation stated that an abridged account of the missing pages was available, the work of translation was not resumed until the following winter--sufficient time for Rigdon to replace the lost matter. Also, the next gap--from October 13 to January 1--was just before the resumption of translation.

The next gap occurs from May to July, 1829. On "a certain day" in May, 1829, the celebrated baptism of Smith and Cowdery occurred. Later, Cowdery declared that

³⁸ Shook, op. cit., p. 132-135.

³⁹ D. C., 3.

the voice of the angel did "most mysteriously resemble the voice of Elder Sidney Rigdon."⁴⁰

Another significant gap is one of two full months-- from March, 1830, to June, 1830. In April, 1830, there was a long, detailed revelation regarding the organization of the church.⁴¹ It is hardly likely that Joseph Smith could have written this sort of thing at that period of his life. For a man experienced in church organizational work--as was Rigdon--it would have been relatively easy. Also, on April 6, 1830, the church was organized. All of this was well within the two month period.

During the last gap, there was an important three-day conference of the young church, beginning September 26, 1830. The gap extends from August until November 14, ten days before the "conversion" of Rigdon. One wonders if Smith and Rigdon made their final plans during this period.

Any one of these gaps allowed ample time for contacts between Rigdon and Smith. Mentor, Ohio, and Palmyra, New York, were 252 miles apart. At the rate of fifty miles a day, the round trip could have been made in ten days. When Rigdon left Kirtland in January, 1838, he traveled sixty

⁴⁰ Cf., post, p. 115.

⁴¹ D. C., 20.

miles in ten hours.⁴² He was accustomed to making long trips on horseback; many such are recorded.⁴³

It is not contended that these gaps are positive proof; that would be an argument for silence. However, the coincidences are striking, for they occur at the very times at which Rigdon's presence would be needed, if he were directing Smith in the production of the Book of Mormon and the organization of the church. When coupled with the testimony of Rigdon's foreknowledge of the Book of Mormon,⁴⁴ this evidence cannot be lightly thrown aside.

⁴² Cf., Joseph Fielding Smith, Essentials in Church History (Salt Lake City, Utah: Deseret News Press, 1928), p. 205.

⁴³ For a partial list, see: Shook, op. cit., p. 137.

⁴⁴ Cf., post., p. 80 f.

CHAPTER III

APOSTASY AND RESTORATION

THE GREAT APOSTASY

As the basis for the need for a new revelation, Mormon writers and missionaries lay heavy emphasis upon the "Great Apostasy." The claim is made that without "warrant of revelation," the form of baptism was changed from immersion to affusion.¹ This is said to be a destruction of the symbolism of a burial.² Also, it is charged that the ordinance was misapplied by being administered to infants.³ These and other practices,

. . . through changing the ordinances of the gospel; by misapplying them in some cases, and adding pagan rites to them in others; by dragging into the service of the church the ceremonies employed in heathen temples in the worship of pagan gods; . . . by changing the form and departing from the spirit of government in the church as fixed by Jesus . . . brought to pass the apostasy . . . the destruction of the Church of Christ on earth.⁴

Further, it is alleged that this apostasy "is not the first time in the experience of men that the gospel has been taken from among them," but that it had been introduced

¹ B. H. Roberts, A New Witness for God (Salt Lake City, Utah: George Q. Cannon & Sons Company, 1895), p. 104-105.

² Rom. 6:3-5.

³ Roberts, op. cit., p. 106-107.

⁴ Ibid., p. 111-112.

in "very ancient times" [i. e., Adam, Enoch, Noah, etc.], later to be removed because of transgression.⁵

This early retrogression proceeded to such a point, they tell us, that:

Nothing remained but fragments of the gospel; here a doctrine and there a principle, like single stones fallen and rolled away from the ruined wall; but no one able to tell where they belonged in the structure, and so many of the stones missing that to reconstruct the wall with what remains is out of the question.⁶

To be quite clear, these teachings refer to the inadequacy of the New Testament itself, for it is said that: "The fragmentary accounts of the gospel, as recorded by some of the apostles, and their associates, is all that was left to the world."⁷ These "fragments" have had some value, being "better than absolute darkness," but are as the light of the moon or the stars, not the full sunlight of God's truth.⁸

Roberts declares that the Protestant argument that the Reformers had removed the corruptions and restored the gospel, needs no refutation, since:

⁵ Ibid., p. 123-124.

⁶ Ibid., p. 125.

⁷ Loc. cit.

⁸ Ibid., p. 126.

One need only say that the gospel having been taken from the earth, and divine authority lost, the only way for their restoration is through the re-opening of the heavens and the committing of a new dispensation thereof to men. As this answers the argument, it is only necessary to prove that Protestants admit the apostasy.⁹

In proof of this contention, Roberts points to the muddled state of Protestantism, which, of course, is a vulnerable point, for he reminds us that, "well nigh each Doctor understood the Bible differently."¹⁰ Even if an agreement could be had upon doctrines and ordinances, "where, without further revelation," he asks, "is the divinely authorized ministry to teach the gospel or administer its ordinances?"¹¹ The emphasis upon authority is the core of the Mormon appeal.¹²

The above line of argument is followed to lay down a thesis, which stated in one sentence is:

The Church of Christ was destroyed; there has been an apostasy from the Christian religion so complete and universal as to make necessary a New Dispensation of the Gospel.¹³

Dependence upon reasoning is not the sole argument, for it is asserted that:

⁹ Roberts, Loc. cit.

¹⁰ Ibid., p. 132.

¹¹ Loc. cit.

¹² Cf., post, p. 114 f.

¹³ Roberts, op. cit., p. v.

The Scriptures declare that the Gospel of Jesus Christ . . . will be restored to the earth by a re-opening of the heavens, and giving a New Dispensation thereof to the children of men.¹⁴

The Mormons have added a novel element by insisting upon the essentiality of a priesthood; assigning to it, functions usually considered prophetic.¹⁵ "Priesthood is power which God confers upon man, by which he becomes an agent for God, authorized to act in his name."¹⁶ We are told that priesthood was conferred upon Melchizedek, Abraham, Moses, the apostles, and lastly, Joseph Smith.

To hold power delegated to one by Almighty God--to have authority to speak and act in his name, and have it of the same binding force as if the Deity himself spoke or acted . . . is an awe-inspiring thing.¹⁷

Mormons teach that only they are "divinely authorized to preach the Gospel and re-establish the Church of Jesus Christ on earth."¹⁸ All others have "failed miserably."¹⁹ Logically enough, Roberts, who has been quoted so frequently, asked for a committee to read his manuscript, in order "to guard against error or inaccuracy in doctrine."²⁰

¹⁴ Roberts, loc. cit.

¹⁵ Certainly Rigdon's idea. Cf., ante., p. 18.

¹⁶ Roberts, op. cit., p. 187.

¹⁷ Ibid., p. 188.

¹⁸ Ibid., p. v.

¹⁹ Ibid., p. 132.

²⁰ Ibid., p. v.

RELIGIOUS UNREST IN AMERICA

The latter part of the eighteenth century was a period of religious unrest in America. After the Revolution, churches suffered not only from apathy and coldness, but a rapid decrease in membership which became alarming. According to Cleveland, the chief contributing factors were: the attention drawn by a bitter war to material things; the influence of the free thought underlying the French Revolution; the phenomenal emigration to the West; the decreased supply of ministers, due to economic reasons; and the somewhat violent adjustments consequent to the breaking of political and religious ties with England.

The losses in the East were not offset by gains in the West. In the new regions, scarcity of ministers, the general poverty of the settlers, and extremely loose conditions morally, left most of the newcomers unchurched. What visible religion there was, East and West, was largely lifeless and formal.²¹

Partly as a spontaneous reaction from these conditions, and partly due to the concern of religious leaders, what some have called the second Great Awakening, had its

²¹ Catherine C. Cleveland, The Great Revival in the West (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1916), p. 30 f.

beginning. Starting with the students themselves in little Hampden-Sidney College, in 1786, it spread to nearby Washington College. Both were in Virginia. Here were trained many of the Presbyterian leaders of the next generation. The enthusiasm spread to Yale, which became the fount of the Congregational phase. Sweeping over the East, it surged into the newer western states, where it reached its climax in Kentucky. It was in this region that the camp meeting originated. The most spectacular of all was the great Cane Ridge camp meeting in Bourbon County, in August, 1801. Barton W. Stone, of whom we shall hear more later, was the Presbyterian minister most responsible for this vast gathering. Thousands of all denominations gathered, until the woods appeared to be alive with people.²²

However, this revivalism led to a narrow, bigoted sectarianism which was unprecedented. Each denomination strove mightily to build up its own forces at the expense of others. It was an era of religious argument; dogmatism was rife. What has been said of the seventeenth century, could equally well be applied to this period:

The great initial movements by which the Christian church advanced in the combination of the variety of forces into harmonious operation, in every case gave

²² William Warren Sweet, Revivalism in America (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1944), p. 119f.

way to reaction and decline, in which the various forces separated themselves, and some particular one prevailed.

. . . The Scriptures once more became the slaves of dogmatic systems and ecclesiastical machinery, and were reduced to the menial service of furnishing proof texts to the forgone conclusions of polemic divines and ecclesiastics.²³

In nearly all of the denominations, men began to see the need of a new reformation. James O'Kelly of Virginia, began to stir up trouble among the Methodists. O'Kelly became dissatisfied with certain beliefs and practices of the Methodist church. Finally he and his associates withdrew from that body, to organize the "Republican Methodists." The group began in opposition to the power of the episcopate, but later discarded the Discipline and decided to be governed solely by the New Testament. O'Kelly's biographer says of a general meeting held in 1794, that,

Finally Reverend Rice Haggard stood up in the meeting with a copy of the New Testament in his hand and said: 'Brethren, this is a sufficient rule of faith and practice, and by it we are told that the disciples were called Christians, and I move that henceforth and forever the followers of Christ be known as Christians simply.' The motion was unanimously adopted, since which time they have had no other name for their organization.²⁴

²³ Charles A. Briggs, Biblical Study (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1891), p. 371.

²⁴ W. E. McClenny, The Life of Reverend James O'Kelly (Raleigh, N. C.: Edwards & Broughton, 1910), p. 114-115.

When the question of a creed came before them, McClenny relates that, "Next a Reverend Mr. Hafferty, of North Carolina, moved to take the Bible itself as their only creed, and this, too, was carried, and has so remained to this day."²⁵

Altogether, the general meeting adopted five basic principles, which were as follows:

1. The Lord Jesus Christ as the only Head of the church.
2. The name Christian to the exclusion of all party and sectarian names.
3. The Old and New Testaments as the only creed, and a sufficient rule of faith and practice.
4. Christian character, the only test of church fellowship and membership.
5. The right of private judgement, and liberty of conscience, the privilege and duty of all.²⁶

Among the Baptists, Elias Smith was ordained a minister, but later he adopted Universalism, which he soon abandoned to search the Scriptures. With Abner Jones, he left the fellowship of Baptists and organized a "Christian Church."²⁷

²⁵ Ibid., p. 117.

²⁶ Ibid., p. 121-2.

²⁷ Homer Hailey, Attitudes and Consequences (Kansas City, Mo.: Old Paths Book Club, 1945), p. 42. I am indebted to him for suggestion of source material which otherwise I might have overlooked.

However, this was an inconsequential movement and merely furnishes an indication of the tide in the direction of primitive New Testament worship. The chief impetus in the Baptist church was to come from without, when the Presbyterian Campbells cast their lot with that body.

THE STONITES

More important was the movement led by Barton W. Stone, who has been mentioned above.²⁸ Stone, a licensed Presbyterian preacher, was called to the church at Cane Ridge, Kentucky. He tells in his autobiography that he appeared before the Presbytery for ordination with considerable misgivings. Said he,

They [the Presbytery of Transylvania] asked me how far I was willing to receive the confession. I told them, as far as I saw it consistent with the word of God. They concluded that was sufficient.²⁹

Stone was a powerful preacher, capable of swaying multitudes. His leadership in the spectacular Cane Ridge meeting, which attracted a crowd variously estimated from 10,000 to 30,000, has already been mentioned. The intense

²⁸ See p. 45.

²⁹ John Rogers, The Biography of Elder Barton Warren Stone (Cincinnati: J. A. & U. P. James, 1847), p. 50. The first part of the book is autobiographical.

sectarianism which was to manifest itself two or three decades later had not yet ripened. Stone himself says,

. . . It was judged by military men on the ground that between twenty and thirty thousand persons were assembled. Four or five preachers spoke at the same time in different parts of the encampment without confusion. The Methodist and Baptist preachers aided in the work, and all appeared cordially united in it. They were of one mind and soul: the salvation of sinners was the one object. We all engaged in singing the same songs, all united in prayer, all preached the same things.³⁰

Of Stone's reliability as a historian, Bacon comments,

The sober and cautious tone of this narrative [concerning the Cane Ridge meeting] will already have impressed the reader. These are not the words of a heated enthusiast, or a man weakly credulous. We . . . may safely accept his testimony, amply corroborated as it is, to facts which he has seen and heard.³¹

Obviously this statement would apply to Stone the man, as well as to Stone the writer. At the time of the Great Revival Stone began to realize that he was not in full sympathy with Presbyterians. About two years later, he with four others withdrew from the Synod of Kentucky and formed the Springfield Presbytery. This was done without withdrawing from the Presbyterian church. Soon

³⁰ Ibid., p. 37-8.

³¹ Leonard Woolsey Bacon, A History of American Christianity (American Church History Series, Vol. XIII. New York: The Christian Literature Co., 1897), p. 236.

thereafter, they published The Apology of the Springfield Presbytery, of which Stone later says:

. . . In this book we stated our objections at length to the Presbyterian Confession of Faith, and against all authoritative confessions and creeds formed by fallible men. We expressed our total abandonment of all authoritative creeds, but the Bible alone, as the only rule of our faith and practice.³²

This group soon realized that if they intended to abandon everything "but the Bible alone," that there was no more sanction for the Springfield Presbytery than for the one they had recently quitted. Accordingly, they decided to dissolve this body, and on June 28, 1804, published a curious document which they called "The Last Will and Testament of the Springfield Presbytery." A few extracts from the latter will suggest its nature:

Imprimis We will, that this body die, be dissolved, and sink into union with the Body of Christ at large; for there is but one body, and one Spirit, even as we are called in one hope of our calling.

Item We will, that our power of making laws for the government of the church, and executing them by delegated authority, forever cease; that the people may have free course to the Bible, and adopt the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus.

Item We will, that candidates for the gospel ministry henceforth study the Holy Scriptures with fervent prayer, and obtain license from God to preach the simple Gospel. . . .

Item We will, that the people henceforth take the Bible as the only sure guide to heaven. . . .

³² Rogers, op. cit., p. 49.

Item Finally, we will, that all our sister bodies read their Bibles carefully, that they may see their fate there determined, and prepare for death before it is too late.³³

After this dissolution, various problems confronted them. Within a year,

. . . We took the name Christian--the name given to the disciples by divine appointment first at Antioch. We published a pamphlet on this name, written by Elder Rice Haggard, who had lately united with us.³⁴

Also the question of baptism arose. Stone and many of his associates concluded that immersion was necessary and acted accordingly. However, Stone relates that,

The subject of baptism now engaged the attention of the people very generally, and some, with myself, began to conclude that it was ordained for the remission of sins, and ought to be administered in the name of Jesus to all believing penitents. . . . Into the spirit of the doctrine I was never fully led, until it was revived by Brother Alexander Campbell, some years later.³⁵

The movement spread rapidly through the new states of the West. Without any concert, similar branches had sprung from the Methodists, the Baptists and the Presbyterians. All had the common aims of release from human creeds, freedom of private judgment, the simplicity of primitive

³³ Ibid., p. 51-3.

³⁴ Ibid., p. 50. This is the same Haggard who was associated with James O'Kelly. See above, p. 46.

³⁵ Ibid., p. 61.

Christianity, and dependence upon the Bible alone, as the sole rule of faith and practice. They did what men do not always do--the logical thing--by uniting into one body, known as the Christian Connection.³⁶

Stone and Alexander Campbell first met in 1824, and soon became firm friends. After much discussion, most of the Christian Connection congregations merged with the Disciples, beginning in 1832. Since this paper is concerned with the doctrines and attitudes of the Disciples at and immediately before the time of Sidney Rigdon's alleged conversion, i. e. the few years prior to November 14, 1830, it is necessary to study other personalities.

Our attention will now be directed to the group which was the inheritor of these just studied. In the Disciples we will find a synthesis of the O'Kellyites, the Smithites and the Stoneites, plus significant contributions made by Thomas Campbell, Alexander Campbell and Walter Scott. When to the attitudes of the Disciples in 1830, are added the vagaries of Sidney Rigdon, we have an explanation of the origin of practically every early Mormon doctrine. We shall find that from countless directions, fingers point to Sidney Rigdon as the real father of Mormonism.

³⁶ Robert Rickardson, Memoirs of Alexander Campbell (Cincinnati: Standard Publishing Company, 1897), II, 198.

CHAPTER IV

THE ANTECEDENTS OF THE DISCIPLES

Thomas Campbell, who was of Scotch descent, was born in Ireland in 1763. His father had been a Roman Catholic, but became a member of the Anglican church and desired that his sons should "serve God according to act of Parliament." Thomas was not satisfied with the formality and ritualism of the latter body, so in young manhood he identified himself with the Anti-Burgher branch of the Seceders wing of the Presbyterian church. Soon thereafter, he entered the University of Glasgow in order to prepare himself for the ministry.¹

About 1798 he moved to Rich Hill (in Ireland) and in addition to his pastoral duties, conducted an academy. He became very friendly with the pastor of the Independent church, the name by which the Congregationalists were known in Ireland. The Independents believed in the right of every individual to interpret the Scriptures for himself and in the independence of local congregations. In addition

¹ The primary sources for the lives of Thomas Campbell and Alexander Campbell are: Alexander Campbell, Memoirs of Elder Thomas Campbell (Cincinnati: H. S. Bosworth, 1861), 319 pp.; and, Robert Richardson, Memoirs of Alexander Campbell (Cincinnati: Standard Publishing Company, 1897), 2 vols., 1225 pp.

to this, their tolerant spirit, which was marked for the times, greatly influenced Thomas Campbell, who was profoundly disturbed by the narrow, intolerant sectarianism which was rife in Ireland at that time.

The double task of teaching and preaching so injured the health of Thomas Campbell that his physician insisted upon a complete change of climate. In 1807, he sailed for America, leaving his son Alexander to carry on his work at the academy. He presented his credentials to the Presbyterian Synod in Philadelphia and was assigned to a group of scattered churches in Washington County.

To his dismay, he found the churches in the new country even more intolerant than those of Scotland and Ireland. The widely scattered condition of the sparsely settled region left many persons without any pastoral oversight. Campbell found some Independents and members of other Presbyterian branches who had known him in Ireland, so he ministered to them as well as to his regular flocks. Some of his brother ministers began to doubt his orthodoxy, particularly when on a tour for the purpose of administering the Lord's Supper, he found members of other Presbyterian branches who had not communed for years and offered the privilege of communion to them. Charges were brought against him, which eventuated in a vote of the Presbytery

that he was deserving censure. On technical grounds of irregularities in the proceedings, the Synod set aside the censure but held that Mr. Campbell's answer to the charges was "highly equivocal upon great and important articles of revealed religion" which led to the conclusion that he held sentiments "very different . . . from the sentiments held and professed by this church, and are sufficient grounds to infer censure."²

In his letter of defense, Campbell had assured the Synod that he would gladly abandon any unscriptural practice, for he would not venture to "teach anything as a matter of faith or duty but what is already expressly taught and enjoined by Divine authority."³ Furthermore, he stated that he rejected "as inadmissible and schismatic, the introduction of human opinions and human inventions into the faith and worship of the church."⁴ He asked whether he deserved censure for, "simply acquiescing in what is written, as quite sufficient for every purpose of faith and duty,"⁵ or whether he should be rejected because he

² Richardson, op. cit., I, 229.

³ Ibid., I, 226.

⁴ Ibid., I, 227.

⁵ Loc. cit.

would not bind upon himself or impose on others that for which he could not produce a "thus saith the Lord."

Soon afterward, Thomas Campbell withdrew from the Presbyterians and began to preach independently. His answer to the Presbytery shows the pattern of his thinking and directed his future course. His preaching now vigorously condemned the sectarian spirit. But whereas before he had merely sought the union of two branches of the Presbyterian group, he now had a dream of the "end of partyism" by uniting all religious denominations "upon the Bible as the only authorized rule of faith and practice," and the cessation of "controversies about matters of mere opinion and expediency."⁶

The fact that Campbell was censured for a tolerance that he considered entirely scriptural led him to exalt the authority of the Scriptures and to deprecate the authority of creeds. A considerable number of persons, members of various denominations sympathized with his position and looked to him for leadership.

As sentiment crystallized, a meeting was called at the home of Abraham Altars, between Mt. Pleasant and Washington, in western Pennsylvania. In a speech Campbell dwelt upon the evils resulting from the divided state of

⁶ Ibid., I, 232.

the Christian church and averred that this unhappy condition was the result of pride in human opinions and speculations. He insisted that all should abandon everything for which an express warrant could not be found in the Scriptures. He announced the rule that he considered the basis for such action. "That rule, my highly respected hearers," he said in conclusion, "is this, that WHERE THE SCRIPTURES SPEAK, WE SPEAK: AND WHERE THE SCRIPTURES ARE SILENT, WE ARE SILENT."⁷

From this moment can be dated the beginning of what has come to be known as the "Restoration Movement." The rule stated by Thomas Campbell was eagerly accepted as a basic principle. More than a century and a quarter later, it is still the slogan of the brotherhood, the shibboleth by which every religious teaching or "innovation" is tested.

After some discussion of the slogan, a shrewd Scotchman named Andrew Munro arose and said: "Mr. Campbell, if we adopt that as a basis, then there is an end of infant baptism." Campbell was somewhat taken aback--that was more than he had bargained for, so he hastily replied: "Of course, if infant baptism be not found in Scripture,

⁷ Ibid., I, 236.

we can have nothing to do with it." This incident foreshadowed some of the difficulties they would have in applying the announced principle.⁸

On the seventeenth of August, 1809, another meeting was held, at which the group organized "The Christian Association of Washington." A committee of twenty-one was appointed to confer with Campbell. The outcome was the Declaration and Address, written by Thomas Campbell, approved by the committee and published on September seventh. The Declaration and Address stated the aims and purpose of the Association.⁹ A few of the more significant declarations are as follows:

1. They did not consider themselves a church, but only "voluntary advocates of church reformation."
2. Nothing should have a place in the faith or worship, for which could not be found a "Thus saith the Lord, either in express terms, or by approved precedent."
3. Division among Christians is sinful and anti-scriptural.
4. No creed but the New Testament should be bound upon the church.¹⁰

⁸ Ibid., I, 238.

⁹ The address can be found in full in Campbell, op. cit., p. 25-60.

¹⁰ Loc. cit.

Mr. Campbell felt that if the church would magnify the essential things and cease to wrangle over the unimportant, that the differences would soon disappear and unity would ensue.

Many of the opinions which are now dividing the church, had they been let alone, would have been long since dead and gone; but the constant insisting upon them as articles of faith and terms of salvation, have so beaten them into the minds of men, that in many instances, they would as soon deny the Bible itself as give up one of those opinions.¹¹

ALEXANDER CAMPBELL BECOMES THE LEADER

In Scotland, his son Alexander, having decided to devote his life to the ministry, settled into a serious study of the history of the church. In 1808, the family started out to join Thomas Campbell in America, but was hindered by shipwreck. Alexander spent the next year in the University of Glasgow, where the influence of the Independents was sufficient to disturb his religious convictions. Again the family set sail for the New World, reaching Washington, Pennsylvania, in September, 1809.

He informed his father that he could no longer endure the narrowness of the Seceders, and in turn, was strongly affected by listening to the recital of his father's religious experiences in America. He felt that divine

¹¹ Ibid., I, 70.

providence had pointed both in the same direction. The proofs of the Declaration and Address were just off the press. Alexander did the proofreading and found the document a help in crystallizing his own convictions.

In 1810 a meeting-house was erected in the valley of Brush Run, Pennsylvania, where many members of the Association lived. In the summer of 1811, because of continued hostility from without, the congregation reluctantly organized itself into an independent church. Immediately the question of admission to membership arose. Having been Presbyterians, none of the Campbells had been immersed. Alexander concluded after a diligent study of the scriptures that he had not been scripturally baptized. So on June 12, 1812, Alexander and his wife, his father and mother, his sister, and two other persons were baptized upon a confession of their faith in Jesus as the Christ the Son of God. Of this event, Jennings declares:

The importance of this baptismal service is hard to overestimate. It reversed the position of father and son. Up to June 12, 1812, the father had been the leader. He had penned the Declaration and Address, to whose principles the son had given allegiance; he had led in the organization of the Brush Run church. The son, however, was the first to recognize the place of baptism, and from that time became the real leader. He was the right man in the right place.¹²

¹² Walter W. Jennings, Origin and Early History of the Disciples of Christ (Cincinnati: Standard Publishing Company, 1918), p. 137.

UNION WITH THE BAPTISTS

However, the reformers saw the danger of their independent position, i. e., becoming another denomination. Their changing attitude on the question of baptism attracted the attention of Baptists. Also the two groups had somewhat similar ideas regarding the authority of the Scriptures.

Baptists of all parties have, from the beginning, persistently and consistently maintained the absolute supremacy of the canonical Scriptures as a norm of faith and practice. They have insisted on applying the Scripture test positively and negatively to every detail of doctrine and practice. It has never seemed to them sufficient to show that a doctrine or practice, made a matter of faith, is not contradictory of Scripture; it must be distinctly a matter of Scripture precept or example to command their allegiance or secure from them a recognition of its right to exist.¹³

Overtures for union began to issue from both sides.

As Campbell described the situation:

I had no idea of uniting with the Baptists, more than with the Morovians or the mere Independents. I had unfortunately formed a very unfavorable opinion of the Baptist preachers as then introduced to my acquaintance as narrow, contracted, illiberal and uneducated men. . . . They had but one, two, or at the most, three sermons, and these were either delivered in one uniform style and order, or minced into one medley by way of variety.¹⁴

Campbell had greater respect for the Baptist laity:

¹³ A. H. Newman, A History of the Baptist Churches in the United States (American Church History Series, Vol. II. New York: The Christian Literature Co., 1894), p. 1, 2.

¹⁴ Richardson, op. cit., I, 438-9.

I confess, however, that I was better pleased with the Baptist people than with any other community. They read the Bible, and seemed to care for little else in religion than 'conversion' and 'Bible doctrine.' They often sent for us and pressed us to preach for them. We visited some of their churches, and, on acquaintance, liked the people more and the preachers less.¹⁵

The upshot of the matter was that since the Redstone Association had "pressed us to join," a willingness to co-operate was expressed, "provided always that we should be allowed to teach and preach whatever we learned from the Holy Scriptures, regardless of any creed or formula in Christendom."¹⁶ The union was affected, although it was foredoomed to failure. Baptists and Disciples were alike in many ways, but fundamentally different in others. Eventually disruption came, as briefly sketched in the previous chapter.

WALTER SCOTT DISCOVERS THE PLAN OF SALVATION

One other significant contribution to Disciple theology remains to be told. Walter Scott, who has previously been mentioned, reached the same general view as Campbell, but by a different process. A schoolteacher, Scott had pondered over his Bible until, step by step, he came to conclusions similar to Campbell's. When his minister (at Pittsburg, Pennsylvania) drowned, Scott leaped

¹⁵ Ibid., I, 440.

¹⁶ Ibid., I, 440-1.

at the opportunity to preach in the pulpit now vacant, and under the limited restrictions of the time was permitted to do so.¹⁷

Soon after Scott's arrival at Pittsburg, he met Alexander Campbell and the two became firm friends. Campbell had a great respect for Scott's opinions. The latter, though sometimes eccentric in his methods, was a powerful preacher. To illustrate his power, it is related that Campbell was in the audience on an occasion when Scott was at his best. The former was usually very calm, self-controlled and characterized by logical thinking. Yet Campbell became such an enthusiastic listener that "his eyes flashed, his face glowed, and at last he shouted, 'Glory to God in the highest,'" an astounding thing for him to do.¹⁸

Calvinistic views were still prominent in the minds of the Disciples. Baptism was largely looked upon as a command, but as a command to be obeyed by those who were already converted. In a debate with McCalla,¹⁹ Campbell had referred to baptism as a pledge of pardon, but this

¹⁷ Jennings, op. cit., p. 99f.

¹⁸ Ibid., p. 105-6.

¹⁹ Debate on Christian Baptism (Buffaloe [Va.] : Campbell & Sala, 1824), xii, 420 pp. MacCalla was a Presbyterian.

was hardly more than a theoretical view. Scott, after considerable study of the Scriptures, came to the conclusion that baptism must precede pardon. Being of an analytical turn of mind, he became engrossed in the consecutive order of the various items in the gospel. He placed them thus: 1, faith; 2, repentance; 3, baptism; 4, remission of sins; 5, Holy Spirit.²⁰

These steps became known as "the first principles of the gospel," and are so dominated today, not only by Disciples but by the Mormons. The matter seemed almost like a new revelation to Scott. He boldly decided to preach on this basis. Before a large audience, he developed his theme around the query, "What shall we do?"²¹ Just as he was closing the lengthy sermon, a stranger came into the audience, and when Scott closed by quoting the words of Peter and inviting the auditors to come forward and be baptized for the remission of sins, to everyone's surprise, the stranger responded. Scott was as startled as anyone in the audience.²²

However, he took the candidate's confession and then baptized him. Still puzzled, he wrote to the individual

²⁰ Richardson, op. cit., II, 208.

²¹ Acts. 2:37.

²² Richardson, op. cit., II, 210-12.

asking him to explain his reasons for presenting himself for baptism. Among other things the reply stated:

I had read the second chapter of Acts, when I expressed myself to my wife as follows: 'Oh this is the gospel; this is the thing we wish--the remission of our sins! Oh that I could hear the gospel in these same words as Peter preached it! I hope I shall some day hear it, and the first man I meet who will preach the gospel thus, with him will I go.' So, my brother, on the day you saw me come into the meeting-house my heart was open to receive the word of God, and when you cried, 'The Scripture shall no longer be a sealed book. God means what he says. Is there any man present who will take God at his word and be baptized for the remission of sins?'--at that moment my feelings were such that I could have cried out, 'Glory to God! I have found the man, whom I have long sought for.' So I entered the kingdom when I readily laid hold of the hope set before me.²³

Richardson refers to this letter as the satisfactory solution of an enigma. The "practical restoration of the design of baptism" was due not solely to the efforts of the preacher. It demonstrated the power of God. The preacher experimentally--almost unwittingly--broadcast the seed which happened to fall upon good soil which God alone had prepared.²⁴

Scott was working upon virgin soil--at least in modern times. The formula he had found ran counter to

²³ Ibid., II, 214.

²⁴ Ibid., II, 214-15.

preaching among the denominations.²⁵ It also was in advance of the teaching of the Disciples. Alexander Campbell himself afterward said:

We can sympathize with those who have this doctrine in their own creeds unregarded and unheeded in its import and utility; for we exhibited it fully in our debate with Mr. McCalla in 1823, without feeling its great importance and without beginning to practice upon its tendencies for some time afterward.²⁶

However, when the reports reached Campbell, he feared that Scott had been rashly precipitious. After a consultation, it was decided that his father should visit the Western Reserve and examine the state of affairs. Thomas Campbell went and remained for some time, but,

²⁵ It still does. I believe that the Disciples and the Mormons are the only major Protestant groups which teach that faith is the simple belief of testimony, without a direct operation of the Holy Spirit; and, that water baptism precedes salvation. Most evangelical bodies believe that "feeling is an evidence of pardon." Methodists teach that salvation is "by faith only"; Baptists, that baptism is a church ordinance to be applied to those already saved, etc., etc.

²⁶ Richardson, op. cit., II, 217. E. g., John Wesley had declared that "Baptism administered to real penitents, is both a means and seal of pardon. Nor did God ordinarily in the primitive Church bestow this [pardon] on any, unless through this means." Notes upon the New Testament (New York: G. Lane & P. P. Sandford, 1841), p. 340. Similar citations could be made from Calvin, the Westminster Confession, the Thirty-nine Articles, etc. However, these are largely theoretical and inoperative from a practical point of view.

. . . saw at once that what he and his son Alexander had plainly taught was now reduced to practice; that the simply primitive method of administering the gospel was really restored.²⁷

It did not take long for Scott's discovery to be generally accepted by the Disciples. It was, and is, considered the most significant contribution made to the Restoration movement, after those made by the two Campbells. Alexander Campbell freely admitted the debt. The following, from his pen, is typical of subsequent teachings:

In the natural order of the evangelical economy, the items stand thus;--1. Faith; 2. Reformation [Repentance]; 3. Immersion; 4. Remission of sins; 5. Holy Spirit; and 6. Eternal Life.²⁸

Parallels in Mormon literature can be selected almost at random, e. g., in reference to the events recorded in the second chapter of Acts, Orson Pratt sets forth that:

It will be perceived that the great congregation of sinners to whom the apostles addressed themselves, were required--

First,--To believe that Jesus Christ was the Son of God,

Secondly,--To repent of their sins,

And, thirdly,--To be baptised in the name of Jesus Christ.

²⁷ Richardson, op. cit., II, 218-19.

²⁸ C. B., VI, 3, p. 486. (October 6, 1828)

And they were promised that, after attending to these three things, they should receive, first A REMISSION OF THEIR SINS, and secondly, THE GIFT OF THE HOLY GHOST.²⁹

If the two last are numbered 4 and 5, they become identical with Campbell's list. Number 6, of course is inferred. Both Disciples and Mormons refer to these steps as, "The first principles of the gospel" or "The plan of salvation." Each group emphasizes and defines the terms as identically as is possible, until the fifth step is reached. The Mormon divergence there is exactly the position that Rigdon preached, even after he was united with the Disciples.

This parallelism continues straight down the line of early Mormon doctrines. This fact is demonstrable. It also can be demonstrated that where Mormon doctrine did deviate, that the deviations were those which constantly kept Rigdon "in hot water" while he was with the Disciples. The similarities apply to nomenclature and terminology in a way that is truly remarkable, if some of the examples had been recorded on golden plates buried in the hill Cumorah for fourteen centuries.

True, every religious body calling itself Christian has many points of similarity with every other such body,

²⁹ Orson Pratt, A Series of Pamphlets (Liverpool [Eng.]: R. James, 1851), No. 3, p. 2.

and perhaps an overwhelming number when compared to some other group with which it has a known historical connection. But there are no two bodies known to this writer, which have such extraordinary likenesses--and just as striking differences--yet have no historical kinship.

Furthermore, Scott had developed his outline of "the first principles" in the fall of 1827, at Lisbon, Ohio.³⁰ He and Rigdon had been intimate since their first meeting in 1823. For a few months they had labored together, when their churches in Pittsburgh united. In 1827, Rigdon was preaching for two congregations, at Mentor, Ohio, about 45 miles from Lisbon, and at Mantua, Ohio, only 30 miles from Lisbon.

On the other hand, Joseph Smith admittedly did not commence to translate the book of Mormon until April 12, 1828.³¹ It is indisputable that from that date until the Book of Mormon appeared in print in 1830, no one other than the Disciples was preaching "first principles."

At this period the Disciples had not spread beyond Virginia, western Pennsylvania, Ohio, and Kentucky. None of their ministers had preached in western New York. There

³⁰ His first convert was baptized November 18, 1827. Richardson, op. cit., II, 214.

³¹ Joseph Smith and Heaman C. Smith, History of the Church (Lamoni, Iowa: The Reorganized Church, L. D. S., 1908), p. 23.

is no record of Joseph Smith's meeting any preacher of the Disciples, until he converted Parley P. Pratt after the appearance of the Book of Mormon. Pratt was a disciple of Rigdon.

Unless Smith's story of a divine revelation is true, the Book of Mormon must have had a Disciple background. Rigdon is the only Disciple who can conceivably have furnished this background. Even if Smith's account is credible, there remains the incredible alternative, that Thomas Campbell, Alexander Campbell, Barton W. Stone, Walter Scott, and Sidney Rigdon stumbled upon every essential point of Mormon doctrine--without benefit of revelation.

It remains to demonstrate the evidences of the not only human, but localized origin of the Book of Mormon. After which, the parallelism of the Book of Mormon and the "Inspired Translation"³² with the teachings of the Disciples and Rigdon will be exemplified. The parallel will make its own argument.

³² Strictly speaking, Smith and Rigdon produced, not a translation, but a version. Currently, the title is, The Inspired Version. However, the first edition bears the title: The Holy Scriptures, translated and corrected by the Spirit of Revelation, by Joseph Smith, Jr., the seer. In a conversation with a minor official of the Reorganized Church in which I referred to the version, I was gently corrected with: "Oh, you mean the 'Inspired Translation.'"

CHAPTER V

THE BOOK OF MORMON A PRODUCT OF ITS TIMES

The attitude of the American public toward the Book of Mormon has been curiously diverse. Probably no other religious body has been as persistently active in its missionary endeavors, as the Mormons have for more than a century. Their ambassadors have proclaimed that their sacred book is equal in value to the Bible, indeed superior.¹

During the nineteenth century it attracted several hundred thousand immigrants to America. Today the Mormons stand numerically several positions above such a well-known group as Christian Scientists, for example.² Yet as Mrs. Brodie notes:

Scholars of American literary history have remained persistently uninterested in the Book of Mormon. Their indifference is the more surprising since the book is one of the earliest examples of frontier fiction, the first long Yankee narrative that owes nothing to English literary fashions. Except for the borrowings from the

¹ "We believe the Bible to be the word of God, as far as it is translated correctly; we also believe the Book of Mormon to be the word of God." The Articles of Faith of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints, article 8.

² According to the U. S. Census report for 1936, Mormons rank eleventh, Christian Scientists eighteenth.

King James Bible, its sources are absolutely American.³

The populace at large has been almost as unconcerned. Probably most Americans have heard of Joseph Smith and Brigham Young. In the last century considerable excitement was felt over Mormonism, but that was almost altogether due to the Mormon practice of polygamy. Rare is the gentile who has read the Book of Mormon. As a matter of fact, it is claimed that most Mormons are not too familiar with its contents:

Of the 'hundreds of thousands of witnesses to whom God has revealed the truth of the Book of Mormon,' he [Orson Pratt] knows full well that comparatively few indeed have ever read that book, know little or nothing intelligently of its contents, and take little interest in it.⁴

As has already been stated, the public reception of the first edition of the Book of Mormon was disappointing.⁵ Practically every public reference to it was hostile. About March 26, 1830, the Palmyra bookstore put the book on sale. On April 2, the Rochester Daily Advertiser printed this unflattering review:

³ Fawn M. Brodie, No Man Knows My History (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1946), p. 67.

⁴ T. B. H. Stenhouse, The Rocky Mountain Saints (New York: D. Appleton and Company, 1873), p. 553. Stenhouse was for twenty-five years a Mormon elder and missionary.

⁵ Cf. ante, p. 1.

BLASPHEMY--BOOK OF MORMON, ALIAS THE GOLDEN RULE

The Book of Mormon has been placed in our hands. A viler imposition was never practiced. It is an evidence of fraud, blasphemy, and credulity, shocking both to Christians and moralists. The author and proprietor is Joseph Smith, Jr., a fellow who by some hocus pocus acquired such influence over a wealthy farmer of Wayne county that the latter mortgaged his farm for \$3,000, which he paid for printing and binding five thousand copies of the blasphemous work.⁶

Perhaps the "author and proprietor" was not greatly surprised by this review, and others like it, for the Book of Mormon predicts that,

. . . many of the Gentiles shall say: A Bible! A Bible! We have got a Bible and there cannot be any more Bible.⁷

Anticipating disbelief of its claims, the first edition of the Book of Mormon, and every edition thereafter, contains "The Testimony of Three Witnesses" and "The Testimony of Eight Witnesses." The first three witnesses (Oliver Cowdery, David Whitmer, and Martin Harris) testified that,

. . . an Angel of God came down from heaven, and he brought and laid before our eyes, that we beheld and saw the plates, and the engravings thereon.

The eight had to be content with the being shown only by the "Author and Proprietor of this work" who,

⁶ Brodie, op. cit., p. 82.

⁷ 2 Nephi 29:3.

. . . has shewn unto us the plates of which hath been spoken, which have the appearance of gold; and as many of the leaves as the said Smith has translated, as did handle with our hands; and we also saw the engravings thereon, all of which has the appearance of ancient work, and of curious workmanship.⁸

Thomas Ford, Governor of Illinois, was intimately acquainted with some of these men after they left the church. He gives the following plausible description of how the testimony was secured:

. . . He [Joseph Smith] assembled them in a room, and produced a box, which he said contained the precious treasure. The lid was opened; the witnesses peeped into it, but making no discovery, for the box was empty, they said, 'Brother Joseph, we do not see the plates.' The prophet answered them, 'O ye of little faith! how long will God bear with this wicked and perverse generation? Down on your knees, brethren, every one of you, and pray God for the forgiveness of your sins, and for a holy and living faith which cometh down from heaven.' The disciples dropped to their knees, and began to pray in the fervency of their spirit, supplicating God for more than two hours with fanatical earnestness; at the end of which time, looking again into the box, they were now persuaded that they saw the plates.⁹

THE SPAULDING THEORY

The first serious expose of the Book of Mormon came from the pen of Alexander Campbell, in the Millennial

⁸ Of the eight witnesses, four were of the Whitmer family, two were brothers of Smith, one was his father, and the eighth was Hiram Page, a son-in-law of Peter Whitmer, Sr.

⁹ Thomas Ford, History of Illinois (Chicago: 1854, p. 257. Quoted in Brodie, op. cit., p. 79, 80.

Harbinger, February 7, 1831. This was reprinted as a pamphlet in 1832. However, in 1834, E. D. Howe published a book called Mormonism Unveiled [sic], in which he presented a theory of the origin of the Book of Mormon which has been a bulwark of non-Mormon writers since that time. Based upon numerous affidavits, the theory follows.¹⁰

According to Howe, the real author of the Book of Mormon was Solomon Spaulding, a Dartmouth graduate who later became a Congregational (or Presbyterian) minister. Losing his faith, he quit the ministry and entered secular pursuits. Like many others, he became greatly interested in Indian mounds. Around the year 1812, he started writing "Manuscript Story--Conneaut Creek."

The account purports to have been written by one Fabius, emperor Constantine's secretary. The boat upon which he had started for England, was blown by a great storm to the coast of America. There is a tedious account of the experiences of the group among the Indians.

According to his neighbors, Spaulding never completed this story. Instead, he began a new story, written in the

¹⁰ The story is so important that an account can be found in almost every book discussing Mormonism at any length. An excellent critical summary can be found in George B. Arbaugh, Revelation in Mormonism (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press), x, 221 pp.

"scripture style" in order to increase its ancient flavor. The origin of the Indians was explained. For their names, peculiar names from the Bible were sought out. The manuscript was buried for centuries, until it was found under a stone which was raised by "a lever."¹¹ Because of the method of its discovery, it is called the Manuscript Found.

Spaulding was proud of his work and frequently read parts of it to his friends. Thinking that the story would restore his financial stability, he went to Pittsburgh to find a publisher. Robert Patterson, of the printing firm of Patterson and Hopkins, thought he might publish the book.¹² However, due to financial difficulties, Spaulding moved to Amity, Pennsylvania, leaving the manuscript at the printing office. When he returned, the manuscript was gone, suspicion for its loss being directed toward Sidney Rigdon. Soon after this, Spaulding died, but told his physician he believed Rigdon was guilty of the theft.¹³

The effect of the latter statement is worth recounting. The physician, Dr. Cephus Dobb, bought a copy of the Book

¹¹ Cf. ante, p. 7.

¹² Patterson was a minister.

¹³ Charles A. Shook, The True Origin of the Book of Mormon (Cincinnati: The Standard Publishing Company, 1914), p. 119.

of Mormon, read it, then inscribed on a fly-leaf the following:

This work, I am convinced by facts related to me by my deceased patient, Solomon Spaulding, has been made from writing of Spaulding, probably by Sidney Rigdon, who was suspicioned by Spaulding with [sic] purloining his manuscript from the publishing-house to which he had taken it; and I am prepared to testify that Spaulding told me his work was entitled, "The Manuscript Found in the Wilds of Mormon; or Unearthed Records of the Nephites." From his description of its contents, I fully believe that this Book of Mormon is mainly and wickedly copied from it.

June 6, 1831

Cephas Dodd.¹⁴

The reason Rigdon became a suspect was as follows:

He was born on a farm located not more than fifteen miles¹⁵ from Pittsburg and lived there until he was twenty-six years old (1818-19).¹⁶ It is claimed that Rigdon spent considerable time in the printing office of Patterson and

¹⁴ Ibid., p. 120. Since the usual Mormon comment upon unfavorable statements is to deny their validity on the grounds of ignorance, failing memory, or venom; it might be noted that Dodd was a physician and presumably intelligent; was in a position to know the facts stated; wrote the statement little more than a year after the publication of the book; and presumably had no animus.

¹⁵ Arbaugh says it was about nine miles. Cf. op. cit., p. 9.

¹⁶ Cf. ante, p. 23. Yet, even as careful a writer as Brodie states that "there is no evidence that Rigdon ever lived in Pittsburgh until 1822, when he became pastor of the First Baptist Church." Cf. Brodie, op. cit., p. 428.

Hopkins.¹⁷ The Reverend John Winter, M. D., a member of Rigdon's congregation in Pittsburg, testified as follows:

In 1822 or 3, Rigdon took out of his desk in his study a large MS. stating that it was a Bible romance purporting to be a history of the American Indians. That it was written by one Spaulding a Presbyterian preacher whose health had failed and who had taken it to the printers to see if it would pay to publish it. And that he (Rigdon) had borrowed it from the printer as a curiosity.¹⁸

The Spaulding story has been told at considerable length by numerous writers, Mormon and non-Mormon. Howe, Braden, Linn, Arbaugh, and others cite a mass of supporting affidavits. Mormon writers dispute the evidence on one ground or another, but largely ignore it. Brodie, who denies the story, says that the period was "an era of affidavits."¹⁹

Rigdon hotly denied the whole account, stating in part:

If I were to say that I ever heard of the Reverend Solomon Spaulding and his hopeful wife, until Dr. P. Hurlbut wrote his lie about me, I should be a liar

¹⁷ Shook, op. cit., p. 117-18.

¹⁸ Braden-Kelly Debate (Lamoni, Iowa: The Herald Publishing House, 1913), p. 42. The debate was held Feb. 12-March 8, 1884.

¹⁹ Op. cit., p. 419-433. Yet she cites a number of other affidavits from the same book, relating to Joseph Smith's early life, saying that, these "affidavits can hardly be dismissed by the objective student, particularly since they throw considerable light on the writing of the Book of Mormon." Op. cit., p. 410.

like unto themselves. Why was not the testimony of Mr. Patterson obtained to give force to this shameful take of lies? The only reason is, that he was not a fit tool for them to work with. . . .²⁰

THE HONOLULU MANUSCRIPT

In 1884, a Mr. N. L. Rice, who had bought Howe's printing establishment, and who subsequently moved to Honolulu, Hawaii, accidentally discovered a manuscript in his possession. The manuscript is now in the library of Oberlin College, Ohio. Both of the Mormon churches have copied and published it under the title, Manuscript Found. The contents of the manuscript are unlike the Book of Mormon. Mormon writers point out this fact and uniformly refer to the Spaulding theory as being how finally "exploded" and "disproved."

However, careful non-Mormon writers continue to accept the Spaulding theory, pointing out facts relative to the Honolulu manuscript which Mormon writers completely ignore.²¹ Only three major non-Mormon writers, Bays,

²⁰ Boston Recorder, May 27, 1839, quoted in Brodie, op. cit., p. 427-8.

²¹ The best source for this point is the thorough discussion found in Shook, op. cit., p. 65-77.

Riley and Prince, reject the theory.²² Bays was an ex-Mormon, and Riley and Prince, both of them psychologists, were interested in a theory based upon a psychological study of Joseph Smith.

RIGDON'S FOREKNOWLEDGE OF THE BOOK OF MORMON

Whether or not the Spaulding theory is correct, there is one other piece of evidence connecting Rigdon with the Book of Mormon, which is impressive. Walter Scott, on January 22, 1841, at which time he was the editor of the Evangelist, stated in that publication that Rigdon, "had possessed himself of our analysis of the gospel and the plea for obedience raised thereupon,"²³ and appended a letter from Adamson Bentley,²⁴ relating in part:

You request that I should give you all the information I am in possession of respecting Mormonism. I know that Sidney Rigdon told me there was a book

²² Chase lists six such, adding Bancroft, Stenhouse and Werner. Cf. Daryl Chase, Sidney Rigdon--Early Mormon (Unpublished M. A. Thesis, University of Chicago, 1931), p. 178. Bancroft was decidedly pro-Mormon. A Mormon church official declared that: "We furnished Mr. Bancroft with his material." Cf. Linn, op. cit., p. viii. Stenhouse was an apostate Mormon. Werner wrote a biography of Brigham Young, in which he gives only brief attention to the Spaulding theory. He assumes that the Honolulu Manuscript is identical with the Manuscript Found.

²³ I. e., Scott's statement of "first principles." Cf., ante, p. 64.

²⁴ Rigdon's brother-in-law, who with Rigdon visited Campbell. Cf., ante, p. 25.

coming out (the manuscript of which had been found engraved on gold plates) as much as two years before the Mormon book made its appearance in this country or had been heard of by me.

Alexander Campbell published this in full, together with his own comment, remarking among other things:

The conversation alluded to in brother Bentley's letter of 1841, was in my presence as well as in his, and my recollection of it led me some two or three years ago to interrogate brother Bentley touching his recollections of it, which accorded with mine in every particular, except the year in which it occurred--he placing it in the summer of 1827--I, in the summer of 1826--Rigdon at the time observing that in the plates dug up in New York there was an account not only of the Aborigines of this country; but also it was stated that the Christian religion had been preached in this country during the first century just as we were preaching it on the Western Reserve. Now as the Book of Mormon was being manufactured [fabricated] at that time, for the copy-right was taken out in June, 1829, two years according to Elder Bentley, and three years according to me, after said conversation, (and certainly it was not less than two years,) . . . ²⁵

Coming from a man of the acknowledged integrity and probity of Campbell--not to speak of Scott²⁶ and Bentley--such testimony would need strong evidence in order to be refuted. So far as this writer is aware, no one has even attempted to disprove it. Mormon writers are silent concerning it.²⁷

²⁵ H. N., 1844, p. 38-9. Italics mine.

²⁶ Cf., ante., p. 49.

²⁷ Even such a careful, conscientious writer as Brodie omits any reference to it. Yet Mormon writers are familiar with several other citations from the Millennial Harbinger. It is possible that early references have been repeated, without taking the trouble to check the files of the magazine for additional material bearing on Mormonism.

There is other evidence that Rigdon had foreknowledge of the Book of Mormon. Darwin Atwater, of whom Hayden says,

. . . the uniformity of his life, his undeviating devotion, his high and consistent manliness and superiority of judgment, gave him an undisputed pre-eminence in the church . . . ²⁸

in a letter to Hayden had this to say of Rigdon:

. . . Soon after this, the great Mormon defection came on us. Sidney Rigdon preached for us, and notwithstanding his extravagantly wild freaks, he was held in high repute by many. For a few months before his professed conversion to Mormonism, it was noticed that his wild, extravagant propensities had been more marked. That he knew before of the coming of the book of Mormon is to me certain, from what he said the first of his visits at my father's some years before. He gave a wonderful description of the mounds and other antiquities found in some parts of America, and said that they must have been made by the Aborigines. He said there was a book to be published containing an account of those things. He spoke of these in his eloquent, enthusiastic style, as being a thing most extraordinary. Though a youth then, I took him to task for expending so much enthusiasm on such a subject, instead of things of the gospel. In all my intercourse with him afterward he never spoke of antiquities, or of the wonderful book that should give account of them, till the book of Mormon really was published. He must have thought I was not the man to reveal that to. ²⁹

Dr. Storm Rosa, one of the leading physicians of Ohio, in a letter to the Reverend John Hall of Astabula, in 1841 wrote:

In the early part of the year 1830 I was in company with Sidney Rigdon, and rode with him on horseback

²⁸ A. S. Hayden, Early History of the Disciples in the Western Reserve (Cincinnati: Chase & Hall, 1875), p. 243.

²⁹ Ibid., p. 239-40.

for a few miles. . . . He remarked to me that it was time for a new religion to spring up; that mankind were all right and ready for it.³⁰

Whether or not the Honolulu manuscript is the Manuscript Found; whether or not Rigdon "borrowed" Spaulding's manuscript from Patterson's office; however he may have communicated with Joseph Smith; it seems quite clear that Rigdon had foreknowledge of the Book of Mormon. If he had such advance information, it is incredible that the theology of the Book of Mormon--and of early Mormonism--is not predominantly the theology of Sidney Rigdon.

CRUDITIES IN THE BOOK OF MORMON

Aside for Rigdon's influence, the Book of Mormon is filled with evidences that it was a product of the time of its publication, in spite of its "ancient" language. It abounds in localisms and the theological controversies of the early nineteenth century, not to speak of gross blunders. Some of the latter have been corrected in later editions, but any edition of the book supplies ample material for the purpose of dating it. The Golden Bible is a reflection of contemporary culture. The first serious review of the book declares that it contains:

³⁰ Gleanings by the Way, p. 315. Quoted in Linn, op. cit., p. 66.

. . . every error and almost every truth discussed in New York for the last ten years. He decides all the great controversies; infant baptism, ordination, the trinity, regeneration, repentance, justification, the fall of man . . . 31

A few examples of egregious errors, quite possible to one fluent in speech, but not too well trained as a writer, will be of interest. Many of them are ludicrous.

Now, immediately when the judge had been murdered--he being stabbed by his brother by a garb of secrecy, and he fled, and the servants ran and told the people, raising the cry of murder among them.³²

A "garb of secrecy" must have been a very deadly weapon! But an even more curious use of a garment occurs when Moroni, having "rent his coat," then "took a piece thereof, and wrote upon it," and "fastened it upon the end of a pole thereof," after which, "he went forth among the people, waving the rent of his garment in the air, that all might see the writing which he had wrote upon the rent."³³

Later editions eliminate the second "thereof"; have Moroni waving the "rent part" of the garment; improve the grammar by substituting "had written" for "had wrote"; and change the last phrase to "upon the rent part." This type of redaction is indefensible in the case of the Book

31 Alexander Campbell, "Delusions," M. H., II:93, February 1831.

32 Helaman 9:6.

33 Alma 46:12, 19.

of Mormon, for the claim is made that, not merely the original writings upon the gold plates, but the exact translation was inspired and inerrant. In fact, if the participants are to be believed, Joseph Smith did not make a translation, but saw the already miraculously translated words, which he then repeated to Oliver Cowdery, who sat upon the other side of a curtain. David Whitmer says that, "all the credit is due to God," for:

Brother Joseph did not write a word of the Book of Mormon; it was already written by holy men of God who dwelt upon this land. God gave to Brother Joseph the gift to see the sentences in English, when he looked into the hat in which was placed the stone.³⁴

Apparently, since all the responsibility is "due to God," a theory of accommodation can be stretched to include the ungrammaticisms of a backwoods preacher. To give one further example of crudeness, we are told that, "There were no robbers, nor murderers, neither were there Lamanites, nor any manner of 'ites."³⁵

CAMP MEETING EXPRESSIONS

One familiar with the religious idiom of the preachers of the time, will readily recognize numerous phrases, as

³⁴ David Whitmer, An Address to All Believers in Christ (Richmond, Missouri: Elder David Whitmer, 1887), p. 37. Most of the work of translation was done at the Whitmer residence.

³⁵ 4 Nephi 17.

well as scenes incident to western revivalism. A few typical camp-meeting expressions follow:

Encircled about eternally in the arms of his love.

The chains of hell which encircled them about were loosed and their souls did expand, and they did sing redeeming love.

My brethren, if ye have experienced a change of heart, and if ye have felt to sing the song of redeeming love.

For the arms of mercy are extended toward them.

Lay down the weapons of their rebellion.

Behold, your days of probation are past; ye have procrastinated the day of your salvation until it is everlastingly too late.

By the power of their words many were brought before the altar of God, to call on his name, and confess their sins.³⁶

Perhaps the most striking instance of the contemporary nature of the Book of Mormon, has been given little attention. It seems that one William Morgan, who lived in Batavia, New York, was planning to publish a book disclosing the secrets of Freemasonry. Batavia is about thirty miles from Manchester--and the hill Cumorah. This news aroused great commotion in the surrounding country. After Morgan had been placed in the Canadaigua jail for debt, a band of Masons were accused of forcibly removing him and carrying him across the river to the Canadian side.

³⁶ Cf. M. T. Lamt, The Mormons and Their Bible (n. p.: The Griffith and Rowland Press, 1901?), p. 103.

Shortly afterwards, Morgan disappeared. No trace of him was ever found and the popular belief was that Masons had killed him. The rumors that followed, the publication of Masonic and anti-Masonic claims, and the manipulations of self-seeking politicians, all served to raise public feeling to a fever heat. The matter became a national issue to the extent that Democrats feared that Andrew Jackson might lose the election, in as much as he was a high-ranking Mason.³⁷

When in October, 1827, an unrecognizable corpse was washed up on the shore of Lake Ontario, many were certain

³⁷ Cf. Arbaugh, op. cit., p. 51-3; and Brodie, op. cit., p. 63-6. The only adequate treatment is in S. H. Goodwin's, Mormonism and Masonry (Salt Lake City, Utah: Grand Lodge F. & A. M. of Utah, 1925), 59 pp. and, Additional Studies in Mormonism and Masonry (Salt Lake City, Utah: n. n., 1932), 62 pp. Oddly enough, both Smith and Rigdon became Masons later. March 15, 1842, a lodge was instituted at Nauvoo, Illinois. In eleven months, its membership increased so rapidly that six additional lodges were formed. During a period of less than six months, there were 285 initiations, of which 256 were made Master Masons. To members of the fraternity this increase is phenomenal and could hardly have come about without un-Masonic irregularities. By 1845, Nauvoo was the largest city in Illinois and there was danger of there being more Masons in that Mormon capitol than in the rest of the state. On October 7, 1844, the Grand Lodge declared the members of these lodges clandestine, thus terminating their connection with Freemasonry. Today the church is hostile to all secret orders. A recurring question asked by Mormons of church officials is "Why was Joseph Smith a Mason?"

If the several exposes of the Temple Endowment Ceremonies are correct--all of them are in practical agreement--these ceremonies show evidence of having borrowed from Masonic ritual.

it was Morgan's body. Just before election day, hundreds of thousands of people streamed into Batavia to view the obsequies.³⁸

Altogether, the national excitement was not unlike the Ku Klux scare of the 1920's. When it is remembered that the golden plates were finally obtained in September, 1827, and that the anti-Masonic excitement lasted for several years, it is not surprising that the Book of Mormon reflects the public attitude. The book includes "practically every charge laid at the doors of Freemasons by their enemies during the period."³⁹

Inevitably, the numerous exposes of Masonry had much to say about the fearful oaths which were supposed to bind the fraternity. The words "secret combination" --associated with crime and foul deeds--became the shibboleth of anti-Masons. Accordingly the Book of Mormon relates that:

. . . satan stirreth up the children of men unto secret combinations of murder and manner of secret works of darkness.⁴⁰

. . . the judgments of God did come upon these workers of darkness and secret combinations.⁴¹

³⁸ Brodie, op. cit., p. 64.

³⁹ Goodwin, Additional Studies, p. 22. The following examples and many others are noted by him. Cf. p. 27-35.

⁴⁰ 2 Nephi 9:9.

⁴¹ Alma 37:30.

And it shall come in a day when the blood of saints shall cry unto the Lord, because of secret combinations and the works of darkness.⁴²

The terrible oaths which were supposed to obligate Masons to commit murder, were not left unmentioned:

And now, my son, I command you that ye retain all their oaths, and their covenants, and their agreements in their secret abominations . . . their wickedness and their murders and their abominations shall ye make known unto them.⁴³

. . . He doth carry on his works of darkness and secret murder, and doth hand down their plots, and their oaths, and their covenants, and their plans of awful wickedness, from generation to generation.⁴⁴

After the publication of alleged disclosures of Masonic ritual, anti-Masons triumphantly announced that the "secrets" were secret no longer. Hence, the Book of Mormon boasts that, "their secret abominations have been brought out of darkness and make known unto us."⁴⁵

Not only anti-Masonry, but the rivalry between the denominations of the period is pictured:

And the Gentiles are lifted up in the pride of their eyes, and have stumbled, because of the greatness of their stumbling block, that they have built up many churches; nevertheless, they put down the power and

⁴² Mormon 8:27.

⁴³ Alma 37:27, 29.

⁴⁴ Helaman 6:30.

⁴⁵ Alma 37:26.

miracles of God, and preach up unto themselves their own wisdom and their own learning, that they may get gain and grind upon the face of the poor. And there are many churches built up which cause envyings, and strifes, and malice.⁴⁶

Examples of the reflection of contemporary culture could be cited ad nauseam, but the foregoing should be sufficiently indicative of the early nineteenth century locale of the Book of Mormon, unless, indeed, history literally repeats itself at intervals of fourteen centuries.

⁴⁶ 2 Nephi 26:20, 21.

CHAPTER VI

THE INSPIRED TRANSLATION AND THE DISCIPLES

So much attention has been centered upon the Book of Mormon that most students have almost completely overlooked another Mormon production which is extremely significant, namely, the so-called, Inspired Translation. While it bears the name of Joseph Smith as its revelator, no one disputes that Sidney Rigdon had an important role in its production. Failure to examine this volume would be inexcusable in any attempt to uncover the part that Rigdon played in laying the foundations of Mormon theology.

WIDESPREAD INTEREST IN BIBLE REVISION

The nineteenth century was a period in which there was a tremendous interest in the revision of the English Bible. A number of useful tentative revisions appeared during the century, culminating in the English Revision of 1881, and the American Standard Version of 1901. There are many reasons why this era was a climactic one for Bible revision.

An excellent basis for discussion is provided by Sir Frederick Kenyon, to whom we owe so

much.¹ He divides the history of New Testament textual criticism into six periods.² The first, from A. D. 50 to A. D. 325, began with the composition of the New Testament and ended with the acceptance of Christianity by Constantine. Books circulated in manuscript form; under periodical persecution, copies were subject to destruction; scholarship and material resources of Christians were limited; and there was little opportunity to secure a uniform text, by comparison of copies produced in different parts of the world. All textual problems were created in this period.

The second period extended to 1516, in which year appeared the first printed Greek New Testament. Every copy of the New Testament produced during the period was laboriously written by hand. This period of the transmission and multiplication of texts furnished the vast number of copies with which textual critics have to deal.

The next period reached to 1624, or the year of the publication of Elziver's first edition of the Greek Testament. In this golden age of the English Bible, was

¹ He has written several important books and his was the guiding hand in the purchase by the British government of the priceless Codex Sinaiticus for a mere 100,000 pounds, in 1933.

² Due to the comparatively few variant reading in the Hebrew text, Old Testament revision is relatively unimportant.

produced the amazing succession of versions culminating in the Authorized Version, which is the Textus Receptus in an English dress. The Greek Textus Receptus, which reigned supreme for nearly three hundred years, was established during this era.

The fourth period ended in 1831, with the appearance in print of Lachmann's Greek New Testament. In 1627, the Codex Alexandrinus was brought from Constantinople to England--the first of the great codices to come to the knowledge of the world. Such great scholars as Walton, Mill, Bengel, Griesback, and Scholz began the collection, collation and description of hundreds of Greek manuscripts. It was an interval in which material was accumulated for the use of textual critics.

The fifth period terminated with the publication of Westcott and Hort's Greek text, in 1881. The great names are Lachmann, Tischendorf, and Tregelles. It is largely through their efforts that scholars generally came to realize the necessity for a revision of the Textus Receptus. The labor done during this time, made possible our modern versions.

The final period has not ended. It seems to be characterized by intensive research and specialization.³

³ Cf., Sir Frederick Kenyon, Recent Developments in the Textual Criticism of the Greek Bible (London: Oxford University Press, 1933), p. 1-4.

ALEXANDER CAMPBELL'S REVISION

At the close of Kenyon's fourth period, considerable material for the formation of an apparatus criticus, was available for scholars. While Codex Vaticanus still lay unknown in the Vatican Library, and Tischendorf had not yet rescued Codex Sinaiticus from a waste-paper basket, the noble Codex Alexandrinus was available for all.

Even the ordinary, backwoods preacher was beginning to get fragmentary conceptions of the need for revision. Of the more alert and scholarly individuals, many were contributing in a small or large way toward the total effort. Among this number was Alexander Campbell.

Campbell utilized the Four Gospels by Dr. George Campbell, first published in Edinburgh in 1778; the Acts and Revelation from Dr. Philip Doddridge's New Testament, published in London in 1765; and the Epistles of Dr. James McKnight originally published in London in 1795. He revised all these and published the whole in 1826. His final revision was issued in 1832.⁴

⁴ Alexander Campbell, The Sacred Writings of the Apostles and Evangelists of Jesus Christ, commonly styled the New Testament. Translated from the Original Greek, by Doctors George Campbell, James MacKnight, and Philip Doddridge, with Prefaces, Various Emendations, and an Appendix, Fourteenth Edition [my copy] (Cincinnati: G. W. Rice, 1882), 452, 86 pp. I do not know how many editions have been published, but there have been no changes since the third edition, (1832).

Accompanying notes, which are placed in the appendix, show a high quality of scholarship. Considering the limited apparatus critici available to Campbell, his version was first rate work, and is still sold today under the title, "Living Oracles." If it had not been for the prejudice against Campbell because of religious controversies,⁵ his New Testament would likely have been used widely. P. M. Simms, the best authority on American Bibles says that, "This was unquestionably the best New Testament in use at that time."⁶

In a recent book, Dr. Goodspeed discusses 115 difficult New Testament passages. In each case, he gives the King James reading, the Greek text, the earlier English versions, the solutions offered by translators of the last hundred years, and finally his own interpretation. Dr. Goodspeed considered Campbell's translation the earliest "representative private translation" which was "worth while" to compare.⁷

⁵ Also, the translation of baptidzo as "immerse," naturally limited its use to immersionists.

⁶ P. Marion Simms, The Bible in America (New York: Wilson-Erickson, 1936), p. 249.

⁷ Edgar J. Goodspeed, Problems of New Testament Translation (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1945), p. v.

RIGDON COMPETES WITH CAMPBELL

There can be no doubt that Rigdon was jealous of Campbell. His complaint after he failed in his attempt to fasten communism upon the Disciples, that, "I have done as much in this reformation as Campbell or Scott and yet they get all the honor of it," has already been quoted.⁸

In the sketch of Rigdon in Smith's autobiography, referring to Rigdon and Campbell, it is maintained that:

. . . After they had separated from the different churches these gentlemen were on terms of the greatest friendship, and frequently met together to discuss the subject of religion, being yet undetermined respecting the principles of the doctrine of Christ, or what course to pursue. However, from this connection sprung up a new church in the world, known by the name of 'Campbellites'; they call themselves 'Disciples.' The reason why they were called Campbellites was in consequence of Mr. Campbell's publishing the periodical above mentioned [the Christian Baptist] and it being the means through which they communicated their sentiments to the world. Other than this, Mr. Campbell was no more the originator of that sect than Elder Rigdon.⁹

Rigdon apparently never lost his animus, for in an article in the Messenger and Advocate (Kirtland) of June, 1837, he said:

One thing has been done by the coming forth of the Book of Mormon. It has puked the Campbellites

⁸ Cf. ante., p. 30.

⁹ Joseph Smith and Herman C. Smith, History of the Church (Lamoni, Iowa: Reorganized church, L. D. S., 1908), p. 132. Rigdon of course, wrote this. Cf. ante., p. 32.

effectually; no emitic could have done half as well.
 . . . The Book of Mormon has revealed the secrets
 of Campbellism and unfolded the end of the system.¹⁰

Mormons had early hinted at the limitations of the Bible; they believed it, "as far as it is translated correctly."¹¹ But the Book of Mormon declared that:

. . . Because I have spoken one word ye need not suppose that I cannot speak another; for my work is not yet finished. . .

Wherefore, because that ye have a Bible ye need not suppose that it contains all my words; neither need ye suppose that I have not caused more to be written.¹²

One of the most commonly quoted of all Mormon statements follows:

For behold, they have taken away from the gospel of the Lamb, many parts which are plain and most precious; and also many covenants of the Lord have been taken away; and all this have they done, that they might pervert the right ways of the Lord; that they might blind the eyes and harden the hearts of the children of men. Wherefore, thou seest that after the book hath gone forth through the hands of the great and abominable church, that there are many plain and precious things taken away from the book of the Lamb of God; and after these plain and precious things were taken away, it goeth forth unto all the nations of the Gentiles.¹³

¹⁰ William A. Linn, The Story of the Mormons (New York: The MacMillan Company, 1902), p. 62.

¹¹ Articles of Faith, article 8.

¹² 2 Nephi 29:9, 10.

¹³ 1 Nephi 26:26-29. This was written at a time when much was being said relative to the variant readings of the Greek manuscripts of the New Testament and the need for a new translation. It is evident that the writer did not understand the nature of the differences, nor, in view of the multiplicity of manuscripts, the impossibility of secretly "taking away" parts of the Bible.

The preface to the Inspired Version states that:

As concerning the manner of translation and correction, it is evident, from the MSS. and the testimony of those who were conversant with the facts, that it was done by direct revelation from God.

It was begun in June, 1830, and was finished July 2, 1833. . . .

The MSS., at his [Smith's] death, in 1844, were left in the hands of his widow, where they remained until the spring of 1866, when they were delivered to . . . a committee.

As has been stated, immediately after Rigdon first came to the home of Smith, they received a joint revelation, dated December, 1830, in which Rigdon was told:

And a commandment I give unto thee--that thou shalt write for him; and the scriptures shall be given, even as they are in mine own bosom, to the salvation of mine own elect.¹⁴

The task of translation was begun at once, although at first it was done secretly. The manuscript is all in the handwriting of Rigdon.¹⁵ The first edition was published by the Reorganized church, in 1867.¹⁶ In its catalog of

¹⁴ D. C. 35:20.

¹⁵ Linn, op. cit., p. 69.

¹⁶ The Holy Scriptures translated and corrected by the Spirit of Revelation by Joseph Smith, Jr., the Seer [Plano, Illinois]: Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints, 1867). I have compared two copies in my possession, the first edition and 1936 edition, but have found no evidence of change other than on the title page. Here, "the Seer" is dropped, as well as the word, "translated."

publications, the Reorganized church stresses the value of the Inspired Translation.¹⁷

The Utah church has steadfastly refused to print the version on the grounds that it needed further revision; and for the practical reason that it would make the work of missionaries more difficult.

Since he [Smith] was unable to find the necessary time for the personal attention its publication would require, we may not be too eager to accept the edition that was later printed without his consent he was dead or personal supervision.¹⁸

The same author states that:

. . . Our work as missionaries would be seriously hampered if we used a special revised edition of the Bible. We have so much new scripture to offer to the world without having to revise the Bible to explain our theology.¹⁹

However, there is no indication that the Utah church denies the authenticity or inspiration of this version.

The present church historian states that:

The reason why the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints has not published the entire manuscript is not due to any lack of confidence in the integrity of

¹⁷ However, in a personal conversation, the pastor of the Reorganized Church in a large city, who had enthusiastically praised this version, when asked if he used it in his pulpit, replied that he used the King James version.

¹⁸ E. Cecil McGavin, Cumorah's "Gold Bible" (Salt Lake City, Utah: The Deseret News Press, 1940), p. 227.

¹⁹ Ibid., p. 228.

Joseph Smith, or doubt as to the correctness of the numerous additions and changes which are not in the Authorized Version of the Bible. The members of the Church do accept fully all of these changes and additions as having come by divine revelation to the Prophet Joseph Smith. The reason that it has not been published by the Church is due to the fact that this revision was not completed.

* * * * *

For all practical purposes the missionaries of the Church have found it advantageous to use the King James translation, which is accepted by most Protestants. Nevertheless, many of the missionaries have called attention to some of the passages revised by Joseph Smith which give a plain and more reasonable rendition over that of other translations.²⁰

The Inspired Version is basically the Authorized Version. Long passages, sometimes whole books, are not altered at all. Most of the new work consists of additions to verses, somewhat after the manner of the Jewish Targums, or additional verses within a chapter. Many of the actual revisions are of little consequence.

Most of the Old Testament changes occur in Genesis, Isaiah and some of the Psalms. In the New Testament the revisions are found chiefly in the Gospels and the Apocalypse. There are two purposeful corrections; in the fifteenth chapter of Genesis, and the twenty-ninth chapter of Isaiah. In the former, twelve verses are added to the end of the chapter, so that Joseph before his death predicts that, "a choice seer will I raise up out of the fruit of

²⁰ Joseph Fielding Smith, in a personal letter dated July 15, 1946.

thy loins," who would be greatly blessed, "and his name shall be called Joseph, and it shall be after the name of his father."²¹

In the same way, the twenty-ninth chapter of Isaiah is expanded as follows:

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

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

* * * * *

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

Is it possible that in verse fourteen there is a not too thinly-veiled hint of the relationship of Rigdon and Smith in the production of the Book of Mormon? A linking of this verse with verse four of the celebrated joint revelation is suggestive.²²

Alexander Campbell, the champion of the immersionists, was having gigantic debates over the question of baptism. Not to be outdone, Rigdon has Adam hearing the gospel, and in obedience to it, being baptized. In this version

²¹ Genesis 50:27, 33.

²² Cf. ante., p. 32.

there is no necessity for arguments over the meaning of baptizo, for:

It came to pass, when the Lord had spoken with Adam our father, that Adam cried unto the Lord, and he was caught away by the Spirit of the Lord, and was carried down into the water, and was laid under the water, and was brought forth out of the water; and thus was baptized.²³

Even the lowliest reader, in reading this passage should have no doubts regarding the mode of baptism. All of this was, of course, as good Baptist doctrine as it was Disciple, but the distinctive doctrine of the Disciples was made plainer, and Walter Scott's terminology is antedated by some thousands of years. Enoch preaches as follows:

And now, behold, I say unto you, This is the plan of salvation unto all men, through the blood of mine Only Begotten, who shall come in the meridian of time.²⁴

It is needless to cite other passages from the Inspired Version, for the foregoing should be sufficient to indicate that this version has the same background as the Book of Mormon. Both show evidence of an ambition to originate a new religion which, while embodying the characteristic principles of the rapidly growing Disciples, would add other features that seemed desirable to Rigdon.

²³ Genesis 6:67.

²⁴ Genesis 6:65.

Evidently Rigdon intended that he should be Aaron of Smith's Moses. In later years he said:

For the existence of that church there had to be a revelator, one who received the word of the Lord; a spokesman, one inspired of God to expound all revelation, so that the church might all be of one faith. Without these two men the Church of Latter-Day Saints could not exist.²⁵

Smith was to receive revelation; Rigdon was to be the leader. For a while this distribution of office worked. Revelations sustained it. As late as October, 1833, Sidney was told that:

I will ordain you unto this calling, even to be a spokesman unto my servant Joseph. . . . 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.²⁶

On January 19, 1841, after there had been trouble between the two men, there came this revelation:

And again, verily I say unto you, if my servant Sidney will serve me and be counselor unto my servant Joseph . . . and if he will . . . remain with my people, behold, I, the Lord your God, will heal him that he shall be healed: and he shall lift up his voice again on the mountains, and be a spokesman before my face.²⁷

But it was too late. Sidney had not taken the measure of his man. Joseph was no longer a callow youth,

²⁵ Personal letter, dated May 25, 1873, now in the New York Public Library. Cf. Linn, *op. cit.*, p. 320.

²⁶ D. C. 100:9-11.

²⁷ D. C. 124:103-104.

but a man--a handsome, magnetic man. Perhaps he began to believe that he was inspired. At any rate he believed in himself. He knew his strength; he was the Prophet.

CHAPTER VII

DISCIPLE AND MORMON DOCTRINES COMPARED

Thus far, sufficient facts have been established to demonstrate that both the Book of Mormon and the Inspired Translation are products of nineteenth century culture. Striking resemblances between the Disciples of Christ and the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints have been pointed out. The backgrounds for the "current reformation" and for the task of Bible translation have been shown.

However, similarities may be superficial. Surface likenesses do not necessarily indicate kinship, or they may merely be a part of the intricate overlapping of beliefs, which makes the American religious pattern such a confusing one.

It is the purpose of this chapter to show conclusively that the Mormon resemblance to the Disciples is significant of a relationship that is historical and not merely contemporary. Furthermore, that the agreements are not isolated counterparts, but deliberate imitations.

To accomplish this aim, a systematic--though necessarily brief--examination will be made of every important doctrine, practice or attitude of the two groups. In each case, the position of the Disciples will be exhibited, followed by a statement of the Mormon attitude.

It will be found in every instance that the Mormon attitude is either "a reasonably exact facsimile" of the Disciples, a competitive elaboration, or a negation identical with a previously exhibited attitude of Sidney Rigdon.¹

Within recent years many of the doctrines of Mormonism have developed greatly; new ones have come into being. Obviously those areas lie outside the province of this paper. Neither are we concerned with such doctrines as polygamy, which came about not as a doctrine to be believed, but as a practice to be justified.² Eliminating these

¹ "Rigdon was a thorough Bible scholar, a man of fine education, and a powerful orator. He soon worked himself deep in Joseph's affections, and had more influence over him than any other man living. 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 of the brethren were mistaken; for we thought at that time just as Brother Joseph did about it. But alas! In a few years we found out different. Sidney Rigdon was the cause of almost all the errors which were introduced while he was in the church." David Whitmer, An Address to All Believers in Christ (Richmond, Missouri: Elder David Whitmer, 1887), p. 35.

² The Utah Mormons are realistic regarding polygamy. Brigham Young once frankly stated: "I myself sealed dozens of women to Joseph." Cf. Fawn M. Brodie, No Man Knows My History (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1946), p. 334. The Reorganized church persists in denying patent facts. David Whitmer, who certainly knew Smith well, wrote: "Was not Joseph Smith a man subject to like passions? Had you been with him as much as I was, and knew him as well as I knew him you would also know that he could fall into error and transgression: but with all his weaknesses, I always did love him." Op. cit., p. 43.

extraneous matters, the origin of Mormon theology can be explained only via Sidney Rigdon.

I. THE NAME OF THE CHURCH

One of the first problems which concerned the Disciples was the name they were to wear. Very early, the Campbells and others insisted upon "a pure speech," i. e., "calling Bible things by Bible names." They rejected such names as "Lutheran," on the ground that honor was paid to a human being rather than to Christ. "Baptist," "Episcopalian," and the like, were undesirable because they called attention to some distinctive belief or type of organization. All sectarian names were divisive, while the body of Christ should be united.

Protestant bodies are all founded upon Protestant peculiarities. Indeed, there is but one radical and distinctive plea in any of them. That is their center of attraction and of radiation. They baptize themselves at the laver of that idea, and assume the name of it, whatever it may be, Episcopalian, Presbyterian, or Methodist, etc., etc. They build on what is peculiar, and thus, in effect, undervalue that which is common to them all. And yet, themselves being judges, that which is common is much more valuable than that which is peculiar. The sub-basis of all parties is the tenet which is their cognomen.³

Hence, the necessity for a rigidly scriptural name for the church, as an organization, to wear. Nicknames

³ Alexander Campbell, Christian Baptism (Bethany, [Va.]: Alexander Campbell, 1851), p. 17.

were odious to the Disciples. Campbell relates that the decisive reason for the change in the name of his periodical from Christian Baptist to that of Millennial Harbinger was because his co-laborers were being called "Christian Baptists."⁴

Alexander Campbell preferred the term "Disciples of Christ," because, he argued: it is more ancient; it is more descriptive; it is more scriptural; and it had not been appropriated by any sect.⁵

His father preferred the name "Christian," as did Barton W. Stone. However, none of them was contentious, believing that any name sanctioned by the New Testament was permissible.⁶

⁴ M. H., X (1839), 337, 338.

⁵ Loc. cit.

⁶ In the latter part of the last and the early part of the present century, a split arose over the introduction of instrumental music and missionary societies. Since 1906, U. S. census reports recognize them as two distinct bodies: the "progressives" as "Disciples of Christ"; and the "conservatives" as "Churches of Christ." The latter are uniformly so-called. However, it is interesting to note that in the eastern part of the United States, where Alexander Campbell labored most, the "progressives" are commonly called "Disciples of Christ." In the south and middle west, where Stone's influence was strongest, they are usually known as "Christian Churches." In the far west and to a considerable extent in the middle west, they often are called "Churches of Christ." In recent years the "progressives" have split into a liberal and neo-conservative group. What is perhaps the ablest and most widely-read liberal religious journal in the United States was founded and is still edited by men aligned with the liberal wing, The Christian Century.

The Mormons have followed the same pattern of thought. However, the matter of choosing a name was simplified for them, in that a revelation was received, not only naming the church, but giving the exact date of its inauguration:

The rise of the Church of Christ in these last days, being one thousand eight hundred and thirty years since the coming of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ in the flesh. . .⁷

At a conference of the elders, May 3, 1834, the name of the church was changed to "The Church of the Latter-Day Saints." Rigdon made the motion.⁸ The intent was to avoid the nickname Mormon, since the name "Christian" was not specific enough for the gentiles. The new name conformed to Rigdon's view of an imminent millennium.⁹

In Rigdon's zeal over their being saints of the pre-millennial era, he completely forgot the name of Christ. The Lord noted the defect, so that on April 26, 1838, another revelation was received commanding that: "Thus

⁷ D. C., 20:1. Smith and Rigdon were unaware, of course, that the calculations of Dionysius, upon which the Christian era is dated, was at least four years too late. Curiously, I have never seen any comment by non-Mormons upon this testimony to the divinity of the revelation. Mormons use the revelation to prove the accuracy of Dionysius and the error of present-day historians.

⁸ Cf. Joseph Smith and Heman C. Smith, History of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints (Lamoni, Iowa: Reorganized Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints, 1908), p. 453-4.

⁹ Cf., post. p. 128.

shall my church be called in the last days, even the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints."¹⁰

The Latter-Day saints were following in the footsteps of their predecessors, for the Book of Mormon tells of the same argumentation on this continent eighteen hundred years earlier. Rigdon pictures the Nephites much troubled, so that when Jesus asks their needs, they reply:

Lord, we will that thou wouldst tell us the name whereby we shall call this church; for there are disputations among the people concerning the matter.

And the Lord said unto them:

. . . Have they not read the scriptures, which say ye must take upon you the name of Christ, which is my name? For by this name shall ye be called at the last day.¹¹

One needs to be versed in the period of Rigdon and Smith to appreciate this point. Hardly an issue of the Christian Baptist or the Millennial Harbinger failed to discuss the matter of names.

II. NAMES OF FOLLOWERS

The above discussion makes clear the use of such terms as "Disciples" or "Christians," the particular one

¹⁰ D. C., 115:4. Later when Rigdon was expelled from the church, he organized a faction which he named the "Church of Christ."

¹¹ 3 Nephi 27:3-5.

used, being dependent upon the name of the body as a whole. Either name had the precedent of Scripture.

For the Mormons, their name was a gain. The church had a designation which not only carried the authority of Christ, but the added glory of the elect who were heirs of all the ages. They themselves could boast of a title which bore all the holy connotations that centuries of Roman Catholic tradition had attached to it. At the same time, the name as applied to all followers of Christ, was eminently scriptural.¹² Not merely a few persons--and those no longer alive--but every Mormon could proudly call himself a saint.

III. CREEDS

As has been seen, the Disciples had consistently opposed the use of creeds. By way of definition:

A creed or confession of faith is an ecclesiastic document--the mind and will of some synod or council possessing authority--as a term of communion, by which persons or opinions are to be tested, approbated, or reprobated.¹³

They had no objection to any man's writing a simple statement of belief--or printing it--but they strongly protested against his making it a test of membership in God's church. For they,

¹² Cf., 1 Cor. 1:2; 2 Cor. 1:1; Eph. 1:1; etc.

¹³ Campbell-Rice Debate (Lexington, Kentucky: A. T. Skellman & Son, 1844), p. 762.

. . . regarded human creeds as both the cause and the effect of partyism, and the main perpetuating causes of schism, and therefore, remonstrated and inveighed against them.¹⁴

In fact, Campbell was prepared to affirm that "human creeds as bonds of union and communion, are necessarily heretical and schismatical."¹⁵ Greater opposition than that, could no one offer.

The "articles of faith," supposedly written by Smith himself, are printed on the back of the calling card which the Mormon elder presents. Although they have the effect of a creed, Mormons deny that they are a creed or that they are used as a test of fellowship. Orson Pratt declared that any creed written "without the aid of immediate revelation" stirs up strife,¹⁶ while Smith said that creeds set up limiting "stakes."¹⁷

IV. THE KINGDOM OF GOD

One of the major parallels has usually been overlooked.¹⁸ The Disciples have been almost alone in insisting

¹⁴ Ibid., p. 783-4.

¹⁵ Ibid., p. 759. Italics mine.

¹⁶ George B. Arbaugh, Revelation in Mormonism (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1932), p. 12.

¹⁷ Loc. cit.

¹⁸ Arbaugh, alone, seems to have noted its significance, op. cit., p. 14.

upon the identity of the church with the kingdom of God. To them the church was a divine institution. Jesus said to Peter: "Upon this rock I will build my church."¹⁹ After Peter's sermon on the day of Pentecost, "the Lord added to the Church daily such as should be saved."²⁰ Paul tells the Ephesians that Christ is "the head over all things to the Church."²¹ More than that, "he is the saviour of the body."²² The sermons and writings of the Disciples, not only then, but to this day, are filled with these and similar passages.

It followed from these that salvation could be found only in the Church, for Christ "purchased [it] with his own blood."²³ Therefore, it not only behooved men to get into the church, but it was a sin to divide the church.

The Disciples thought of this divine institution, not as a denomination, but as the sum total of the children of God.²⁴ Divisive opinions had torn apart the Church of

¹⁹ Matt. 16:18.

²⁰ Acts 2:47 (A. V.).

²¹ Eph. 1:22.

²² Eph. 5:23.

²³ Acts 20:28.

²⁴ Cf. Declaration and Address.

Christ. Then let men go back to the "Ancient order of things."²⁵

The Mormons have carried this principle to its ultimate. The first question that Joseph Smith addressed to the angel was, "which of all the sects was right--and which should I join." The answer was that they were all wrong.²⁶ From the very beginning Mormon missionaries have led their listeners to the point of admitting that not all the churches can be right. Only one can be. If that be true, then which one is divine?

No one can read Mormon literature without being impressed with the constant emphasis upon authority. Campbell restored the gospel, but Rigdon restored the priesthood.²⁷ Campbell insisted that the Bible was the only source of authority. Rigdon wrote a new Bible; the old Bible being "an insufficient guide."²⁸

The Disciples preached that the Apostle Peter used the keys of the Kingdom of Heaven, that Christ had bestowed

²⁵ Beginning in 1824, Campbell published a series of thirty-two articles, entitled "A Restoration of the Ancient Order of Things." Cf., C. B., II. (February, 1825), 126.

²⁶ Cf., ante p. 4.

²⁷ This can unquestionably be attributed to Rigdon. Cf., ante. p. 18.

²⁸ Cf., Orson Pratt, A Series of Pamphlets (Liverpool, [Eng.]: R. James, 1851), "Divine Authenticity of the Book of Mormon," No. 3, p. 34.

upon him,²⁹ to open the doors of the church at the first Pentecost after the resurrection of Christ. No less a person than John the Baptist appeared to Joseph Smith and Oliver Cowdery, saying:

Upon you my fellow servants in the name of Messiah, I confer the Priesthood of Aaron, which holds the keys of the ministering of angels, and of the Gospel of repentance, and of baptism by immersion for the remission of sin. . . .³⁰

Later, Cowdery was to say that the voice of this angel did "most mysteriously resemble the voice of Elder Sidney Rigdon."³¹

The Mormons could, and did, argue that they were the only organization to have a completely "restored" church. The Disciples had insisted upon a congregational government, with elders and deacons according to what they believed was the New Testament pattern. The Mormons had not only twelve apostles, but such an elaborate system of lesser officials, that a very large proportion of the membership could hold office.

²⁹ Matt. 16:19.

³⁰ Cf., ante., p. 9. To Mormons, this is the key sentence to the whole system.

³¹ Cf. Charles A. Shook, The True Origin of the Book of Mormon (Cincinnati: Standard Publishing Co., 1914), p. 149. The possibility of Rigdon's visits to Smith have already been discussed. Cf., ante., p. 33f.

The Mormon church preaches an authoritarianism which in many respects is more emphatic than Roman Catholic dogma.³² Orson Pratt, brother of Parley P. Pratt who "converted" Rigdon, declares:

Since the church with its authority and power has been caught away from the earth, the great "mother of harlots" with all her descendants has blasphemously assumed the authority of administering some of the sacred ordinances of the gospel. They have blasphemed the name of the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, by using it without authority in their ministrations. They have dishonored the name of Christ by calling their powerless, apostate, filthy, and most abominable churches, the Church of Christ. The whole Romish, Greek, and Protestant ministry, from the Pope down through every grade of office, are as destitute of authority from God, as the devil and his angels. The Almighty abhors all their wicked pretensions, as he does the very gates of hell.³³

This principle of authority extends down to the most minute particulars.

Who is authorized to break the bread and bless it, and also the wine, and administer it to the saints? Can teachers or deacons do this with authority? . . .

³² "Whatever it does, and whatever the manner of its working, the efficacy of baptism in no degree depends on the administrator. If in substance it is administered according to Christ's institution, then it is Christ's ordinance, and whatever is done by it, He does it. The administrator may be . . . a schismatic or a heretic. The validity of the sacrament is not affected." Robert Rainy, The Ancient Catholic Church (International Theological Library. New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1902) p. 414.

³³ Orson Pratt, op. cit., "Divine Authenticity of the Book of Mormon," p. 18-19.

In what particular points does a teacher's duty differ from a deacon's? Wherein do the duties of elders, evangelists, and pastors differ? What authority has one which the others do not possess?

.....
Should all saints wash one another's feet, or is this an ordinance limited to the apostles and officers of the church?³⁴

In April, 1830, Joseph Smith received a long revelation defining in detail the organization and government of the church.³⁵ The duties of officers are prescribed more minutely than in the by-laws of most organizations. Instructions are given even for such matters as sending delegates to conferences, keeping the church roll and transferring members.³⁶

V. THE EVERLASTING GOSPEL

Attention has been called several times to the insistence by the Disciples upon a return to "the ancient order of things." The Christian Baptist and the Millennial Harbinger contain frequent references to the "Everlasting Gospel," based upon Revelation 14:6,7, as follows:

And I saw another angel fly in the midst of heaven, having the everlasting gospel to preach unto them

³⁴ Ibid., p. 34.

³⁵ At this period, there is a lapse of two months in the chronology of Rigdon's activities. Cf., Brodie, op. cit., p. 432.

³⁶ D. C. 20.

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 judgment is come: and worship him that made heaven, and earth, and the sea, and the fountains of water.

This quotation appeared in the prospectus to the Millennial Harbinger. As late as 1929, R. C. Foster, a prominent preacher of the Disciples, published a book of sermons, with the title: The Everlasting Gospel.

When on his visit to Smith in 1830, Rigdon preached his initial sermon to a Mormon audience, he took as his text a paraphrase of part of Revelation 14, which he no doubt was responsible for placing in the Book of Mormon.³⁷ It will be recalled that the angel who described the gold Bible told Joseph that the Book would contain the "fulness of the everlasting gospel."³⁸ In the Doctrine and Covenants the expression is emphatically used many times.³⁹ This is without doubt the favorite passage of Scripture of the Mormon people today. It is not without interest--or significance--that after Rigdon was expelled by the Mormons from Nauveo, he wrote:

³⁷ 1 Nephi 13:40. Cf., Linn, op. cit., p. 76.

³⁸ Cf., ante., p. 1.

³⁹ Cf., 68:1; 99:1; 133:36; especially the latter.

It is a strict observance of the principles of the fulness of the Everlasting Gospel of Jesus Christ, as contained in the Bible, Book of Mormon, and Book of Covenants, which alone will insure a man an inheritance in the kingdom of our God.⁴⁰

VI. FAITH

Walter Scott's analysis of "First Principles" or the "Plan of Salvation" has already been discussed at some length.⁴¹ With that general scheme in mind, reference will be made to the separate steps involved, the first in order being faith.⁴²

Faith, of course, is an essential element of every system of theology, but Alexander Campbell offered a definition of faith which the Disciples--and the Mormons--almost alone have accepted. All of the Protestant reformers affirmed that the inner conviction of the truth of the Word of God is brought about by the Holy Spirit. The Disciples believed that the Holy Spirit operated, not mystically, but through the Word of God. Hence, faith is

⁴⁰ Messenger and Advocate, June 15, 1845, quoted in Linn, op. cit., p. 76-7.

⁴¹ Cf., ante., p. 62f.

⁴² Baptists place repentance first, faith second, based upon Acts 20:21--"repentance toward God, and faith toward our Lord Jesus Christ."

the belief of testimony. "Evidence alone produces faith, or testimony is all that is necessary to faith."⁴³

The parallelism is so close here that a tract upon "Faith" published either by Mormons or Disciples, could be used interchangeably, save for the publisher's imprint. "From trustworthy evidence, rightly interpreted, true faith will spring; from false evidence, only distorted and misplaced faith can arise."⁴⁴ Talmage continues:

The foundation of faith in God then is a sincere belief in or knowledge of Him, as sustained by evidence and testimony, tested and proved by earnest, prayerful search.⁴⁵

VII. REPENTANCE

The position accorded by Campbell to repentance, in the scheme of redemption, is unique. Not only in his definition of it, but also in the relationship it sustains to faith, did he differ radically from the theologians of his time.⁴⁶

⁴³ C. B., 7:58, April, 1824. A passage constantly cited by Disciples is Romans 10:17--"So then faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God."

⁴⁴ James E. Talmage, The Articles of Faith (Salt Lake City, Utah: The Deseret News, 1912), p. 104.

⁴⁵ Ibid., p. 106.

⁴⁶ Kellems, op. cit., p. 207.

Repentance is the fruit of faith; its effect; it is "the adjunct of faith, as the remission of sins is of baptism."⁴⁷ If repentance is genuine, a reformation of life will inevitably follow. In reference to Peter's sermon at Pentecost, Campbell says:

The profession of repentance without reformation or fruits worthy of it, they were clearly informed, would avail nothing. So evident is it that their contemporaries understood by the precept 'repent' what we associate with the word 'reform.'⁴⁸

Mormon theology is again identical with the belief of the Disciples.

It would be of no use for a sinner to confess his sins to God, unless he were determined to forsake them. . . . Repentance, then, is not only a confession of sins, with a sorrowful, contrite heart, but a fixed, settled purpose to refrain from every evil way.⁴⁹

Talmage declares that repentance "indicates a godly sorrow for sin, producing a reformation of life" and therefore, "properly ranks as the second principle of the gospel, closely associated with and immediately following faith."⁵⁰

⁴⁷ Campbell-Rice Debate, p. 432.

⁴⁸ Christian Baptism, p. 79.

⁴⁹ Orson Pratt, quoted by Talmage, op. cit., p. 116-117.

⁵⁰ Ibid., p. 113.

VIII. OBEDIENCE

The Disciples differed radically from other bodies, in reference to the essentiality of obedience, before there could be salvation. Not by faith alone does God save, they preached, but by a "saving faith," that is, an obedient faith. In this connection, no sermon could be complete without a citation of James to prove that, "faith, if it have not works, is dead, being alone," with the succeeding thought that "the devils also believe," but in vain. The triumphant conclusion: "Ye see then how that by works a man is justified, and not by faith only."⁵¹ So important has this doctrine been to the Disciples, that for more than a hundred years, each Church of Christ in America has extended a "gospel invitation" at the close of every sermon. Variations from this custom, even today, are almost non-existent.

Likewise a Mormon Apostle tells us:

No person can truthfully profess faith in Christ, and refuse to obey His commandments; therefore obedience is essential to remission of sin; and the repentant sinner will eagerly seek to learn what is further required of him.⁵²

⁵¹ James 2:17, 19, 24.

⁵² Talmage, op. cit., p. 116.

Talmage notes the warning of Jesus that, "Not every one that sayeth unto me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven; but he that doeth the will of my Father which is in heaven."⁵³ Immediately afterward the same author quotes James 2:14-18.⁵⁴

IX. BAPTISM

The Disciples were not alone in their emphasis upon immersion--the Baptists agreed upon that point. However, Campbell engaged in several debates that attracted great public interest. He became the champion of the immersionists.

Rigdon was eloquent and emotional, but he was not a logician. He could not equal Campbell's skill in debate, but he had another expedient.⁵⁵ Campbell had to resort to Greek lexicons to prove that baptidzo meant 'immerse'; to church histories to show apostolic practice. Rigdon could write a sacred book, revise the Bible, receive

⁵³ Matt. 7:21. A favorite passage with Disciples.

⁵⁴ Op. cit., p. 111-112.

⁵⁵ "Rigdon who always caught and proclaimed the last word that fell from the lips of Scott or Campbell, seized these views, and with the wildness of his extravagant nature, heralded them everywhere." A. S. Hayden, Early History of the Disciples in the Western Reserve (Cincinnati: Chase & Hall, 1875). p. 186.

revelations, that would divinely explain baptism. Accordingly Jesus personally taught the Nephites to, "immerse them in the water, and come forth again out of the water." Jesus then settled the matter with finality by adding:

And there shall be no disputations among you, as there have hitherto been; neither shall there be disputations among you concerning the points of my doctrine, as there have hitherto been.⁵⁶

The teaching of the Disciples regarding the connection of baptism with remission of sins has already been presented.⁵⁷ Mormons hold the same beliefs and offer the same proof texts. But here again, if one accepts their scriptures, "disputations" will cease. "The elders of the church are commissioned to preach the remission of sins as obtainable through the means of authorized baptism."⁵⁸ The Disciples were handicapped by Scriptures from which "many plain and precious things" had been removed, but the Mormons could receive a revelation to "preach repentance and remission of sins by way of baptism."⁵⁹ That was plain enough.

The Disciples had emphasized the importance of baptism, until they had been accused of "water salvation." Rigdon could outdo that.

⁵⁶ 3 Nephi 11:26, 28. Cf., D. C. 20:72-74; 76:51; 128:12.

⁵⁷ Cf., ante., p. 63f.

⁵⁸ Talmage, op. cit., p. 126.

⁵⁹ D. C. 55:2.

Compliance with the ordinance [of baptism] has been shown to be essential to salvation, and this condition applies to all mankind. Nowhere in scripture is a distinction made in this regard between the living and the dead. . . . In the course of the world's history there have been long periods of spiritual darkness, when the gospel was not preached upon the earth; when there was no authorized representative of the Lord officiating in the saving ordinances of the kingdom.

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As baptism is essential to the salvation of the living, it is likewise indispensable to the redemption of the dead.⁶⁰

The doctrine of baptism for the dead was first taught at Kirtland, Ohio--Rigdon's home--after the saints moved there.

X. THE HOLY SPIRIT AND THE MIRACULOUS

The Disciples stood against the entire Protestant world in their attitude toward the work of the Holy Spirit in conversion. They denied that there is "some invisible, indescribable energy exerted upon the minds of men in order to make them Christians; and that, too, independent of, or prior to, the world believed."⁶¹

With regard to miracles, their beliefs were more orthodox. They were convinced that inspiration and the miraculous ceased with the close of the New Testament canon.

⁶⁰ Talmage, op. cit., p. 148 f.

⁶¹ C. B., 1:49, March 1824.

In the words of Campbell, the miraculous work of the Holy Spirit was "confined to the apostolic age, and to only a portion of the saints that lived in that age."⁶²

Rigdon had never been one with the Disciples on this point. Richardson says that:

Rigdon had been for some time diligently engaged in endeavoring, by obscure hints and glowing millennial theories, to excite the imaginations of his hearers, and in seeking by fanciful interpretations of Scripture to prepare the minds of the churches of Northern Ohio for something extraordinary in the near future. He sought especially in private to convince certain influential persons that, along with the primitive gospel, supernatural gifts and miracles ought to be restored, and that, as at the beginning, all things should be held in common. From his want of personal influence, however, he failed in disseminating his views, except to a very limited extent. In Mentor, where he resided, he was quite unsuccessful, but was more fortunate in Kirtland, the adjoining town, where a flourishing church became much disturbed and unsettled by his plausible theories and brilliant declamations.⁶³

Immediately after Rigdon's conversion, the Kirtland church, a large part of which was transferred to Mormonism, became wildly excited:

Scenes of the most wild, frantic and horrible fanaticism ensued. They pretended that the power of miracles was about to be given to all who embraced the new faith; and commenced communicating the Holy Spirit . . . Young men might be seen running over the

⁶² Ibid., p. 125.

⁶³ Robert Richardson, Memoirs of Alexander Campbell (Cincinnati: Standard Publishing Company, 1897), II, 346.

fields and hills, in pursuit, as they said, of the balls of fire, lights., etc., which they saw moving through the atmosphere.⁶⁴

Rigdon was in Palmyra with Smith at the height of this disturbance, but the prophet soon received a revelation that Kirtland was to be the Promised Land of the Saints. The Mormons remained in Kirtland until 1838. Miracles, speaking in tongues and similar manifestations were a conspicuous feature of the early years of Mormonism.

XI. COMMUNISM

Kirtland also became the center of Mormon communistic experiments. Rigdon had become bitter toward the Disciples when he was defeated in his attempt to require a community of goods, in imitation of the early Jerusalem church.⁶⁵ It is unquestionable that he was responsible for its introduction among the Mormons.

If it had ever occurred to Joseph Smith to turn his church into a communistic society, he betrayed no such intention until after meeting Rigdon. The latter had not only studied the New Testament; he had absorbed much of the recent national excitement over Robert Owen's New Harmony.⁶⁶

⁶⁴ Mormonism Unveiled, p. 104-105. Quoted in Hayden, op. cit., p. 213.

⁶⁵ Cf., Acts 4:32 f.

⁶⁶ Fawn M. Brodie, No Man Knows My History (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1946), p. 105. Campbell debated with Owen in April, 1829.

XII. THE MILLENNIUM

It might be supposed, from the name Millennial Harbinger, which was bestowed upon the successor to the Christian Baptist, that Campbell had some peculiar views regarding a millennial period. However, this was not the fact. Campbell explained:

We have often rather jerringly been asked, "Wherein consists the millennial characteristics of the Harbinger?" --the querists imagining that a millennial harbinger must be always discussing or preaching milleniary affairs.

Far from having any such intention, Campbell stated that, "We have not committed ourselves to any of the theories of the present day on the nature and coming of the Millennium."

He held to no such hopes, for he reasoned that,

All the Millennium we could scripturally expect was not merely the restoration of the Jerusalem church in all its moral and religious characters, but the extension of it through all nations and languages for one thousand years.⁶⁷

Rigdon, on the other hand, had visionary theories of the Millennium. Hayden, in speaking of a book of speculative interpretations of these matters, says that: "Rigdon . . . seized these views, and with the wildness of his extravagant nature, heralded them everywhere."⁶⁸

⁶⁷ M. H., 11:561-562, December, 1840.

⁶⁸ Hayden, op. cit., p. 186.

One of Smith's first revelations, has Christ predicting that, "the hour is nigh and the day soon at hand," when he would reveal himself, "And dwell in righteousness with men on earth a thousand years."⁶⁹ In 1843, Smith declared that in answer to his prayer to know the time, he was told that, "if thou livest until thou art eighty-five years old, thou shalt see the face of the Son of Man."⁷⁰

Mormons today emphasize the doctrine so little, that one may forget one of their Articles of Faith:

We believe in the literal gathering of Israel and in the restoration of the Ten Tribes; that Zion will be built upon this [the American] continent; that Christ will reign personally upon the earth; and that the earth will be renewed and receive its paradisiacal glory.⁷¹

XIII. CONCLUSION

In the above presentations of the beliefs of Disciples and Mormons, it would be easy to distort the meanings of the respective theologies, due to the necessarily fragmentary character of the quotations. For an understanding study of either, of course, reference should be made to works in

⁶⁹ D. C. 29:9-11.

⁷⁰ D. C. 130:14, 15.

⁷¹ Article 10.

which a more comprehensive treatment is possible. Otherwise, connotations may be suggested which are at variance with the tenets of the respective groups. The quotations have been used, not for the purpose of giving a complete picture of the theologies, but merely to point out significant parallels and to suggest the sources of these agreements.

CHAPTER VIII

SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

SUMMARY

Early in 1830, at Palmyra, New York, was published a book called the Book of Mormon. Joseph Smith, Jr., its "author and proprietor" claimed that it was the translation of inscriptions upon some gold plates, which in obedience to the command of the angel "Moroni," he had found in a box buried in the hill Cumorah. The plates, he declared, contained an account of a race which formerly inhabited the American continent, together with the "fulness of the everlasting gospel."

Smith, with a few others, organized the "Church of Christ," which declared that it was the only body having authority to administer the ordinances of the gospel.¹ The first important convert to the new church was Sidney Rigdon of Mentor, Ohio.

¹ Cf. the celebrated statement of Orson Pratt: "The nature of the message in the Book of Mormon is such, that if true, no one can possibly be saved and reject it; if false, no one can possibly be saved and receive it. Therefore, every soul in all the world is equally interested in ascertaining its truth or falsity." Divine Authenticity of the Book of Mormon (Liverpool, [Eng.]: R. James, 1851), p. 1.

Rigdon had been a popular orator among the Baptists. After a long conversation with Alexander Campbell, he began preaching the "ancient order of things." These teachings spread rapidly, but dissension arose, and the Disciples were compelled to withdraw from the Baptist associations. Rigdon was noted among the Disciples as being ambitious and a brilliant orator, but inclined to be erratic and excitable.²

Rigdon was suspected of having "borrowed" the manuscript of one Solomon Spaulding, adding a religious element to it, and through Smith, who had gained some local notoriety as a "seer," foisting it upon the public.

Mormonism, as manifested in the Book of Mormon, the Doctrine and Covenants, the Inspired Translation,

² "Captivating as a public speaker by his fluency and his exuberant fancy, he had depended upon these superficial endowments for popularity and success. In private he had been found petulant, unreliable and ungovernable in his passions, and his wayward temper, his extravagant stories and his habit of self-assertion had prevented him from attaining influence as a religious teacher among the disciples. He was ambitious of distinction, without the energy and industry necessary to secure it, and jealous of the reputation of others, without the ability to compete with them. Floating upon the tide of popular excitement, he was disposed to catch at anything which, without demanding labor, might serve for his advancement, and was naturally led to seek in deception the success which he found denied to indolence." Robert Richardson, Memoirs of Alexander Campbell (Cincinnati: Standard Publishing Company, 1897), p. 344.

and, the practices of the church, had remarkable similarities to the Disciples.

Both Disciples and Mormons held that a great apostasy had culminated in the Roman Catholic Church. However, they agreed that the Reformation had not gone far enough, that it was necessary to duplicate the doctrines, organization, and life of the New Testament church. A Disciple slogan was: "In things essential, unity: in things non-essential, liberty." The Mormons insisted upon a facsimile of everything recorded.

The Campbells, Barton W. Stone, Walter Scott, and others brought about a synthesis of what they were convinced, was the primitive New Testament pattern of faith and worship. Most of the fundamentals of this synthesis, were repeated in Mormonism. Where the Mormons differed from the Disciples, the divergences were known favorites of belief with Rigdon.

The Book of Mormon in its anti-Masonry, its camp meeting expressions and its backwoods crudities, shows itself to be a product of its times. Furthermore, Walter Scott, with whom Rigdon was closely associated, had but recently discovered:

. . . relations which the truths of revelation bore to each other had for a long time, in a great measure, been lost sight of, and in consequence of which confusion and darkness had usurped the place of order and light.³

³ William Baxter, Life of Elder Walter Scott (Cincinnati: Bosworth, Chase & Hall, 1874), p. 42.

These principles--the "Plan of Salvation"--were immediately embedded in Mormonism, where they became basic to Mormon theology.

Rigdon not only had expressed bitter jealousy of Campbell and Scott when defeated regarding communism,⁴ but had described the contents of the Book of Mormon two or three years before its publication. Furthermore, the Inspired Translation seems to indicate a desire to eclipse Campbell's translation, which passed through three editions within two years of its first publication.

A comparison of the fundamental doctrines of Mormons and Disciples, shows that with regard to: 1) The name of the Church; 2) The names of followers; 3) Creeds; 4) The Kingdom of God; 5) The Everlasting Gospel; 6) The Plan of Salvation; 7) Faith; 8) Repentance; 9) Obedience; 10) Mode of baptism; and, 11) Purpose of baptism; the identities were too great to be coincidental. In the items of: 1) The Holy Spirit; 2) The miraculous; 3) Communism; and 4) The Millennium; the Mormons varied from the Disciples, in just the ways that Rigdon varied.

⁴ Hayden discloses that he left the meeting, "chafed and chagrined, and never met with the Disciples in a general meeting afterward." A. S. Hayden, Early History of the Disciples in the Western Reserve (Cincinnati: Chase & Hall, 1875), p. 299.

CONCLUSIONS

Today few, if any, of the Disciples of Christ, Christian Churches, or Churches of Christ, would admit that the theology of the Campbells and their associates has any value other than the expression of the beliefs of earnest, devout individuals. But these groups would freely admit the debt that their thinking owes to these same individuals. Mormonism largely has the same debt, but denies its existence. Rigdon's own statement that, "The Book of Mormon has revealed the secrets of Campbellism and unfolded the end of the system," is significant.⁵

The likenesses and differences between the Methodist Church and the Church of England are clear, but they can be explained upon historical grounds. The likenesses and differences between Disciples and Mormons are just as striking, and cannot be accounted for upon the grounds of accident or special revelation.

In defense against the Rigdon origin of Mormon theology, Mormon writers tend to concentrate upon the weaknesses of the Spaulding theory, while largely ignoring its strong points. Practically without exception, they

⁵ W. A. Linn, The Story of the Mormons (New York: The MacMillan Company, 1902), p. 62.

completely ignore Rigdon's foreknowledge of the Book of Mormon, a fact which seems incontrovertible.

Without any necessary dependence upon the Spaulding theory, it seems logical to conclude that the parallelism between the Disciples and Mormonism can be explained only in the light of a transference from the former to the latter, through the mediumship of Sidney Rigdon.

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