



Type: Newspaper Article

Letter IV

Author(s): Oliver Cowdery

Source: *The Latter Day Saints' Messenger and Advocate*, Vol. 1, No. 5

Published: Kirtland, OH, February 1835

Pages: 77-80

Abstract: Visitation of Moroni to Joseph Smith in 1823; description of Moroni's physical appearance and instructions to Joseph Smith

calling upon the people in great agony to read Mr. How's book, as a sure antidote against delusion. As this is all that Mr. C. can do, or dare do, we do not wish to deprive him of this privilege. So we say concerning Alexander, Dudley and co. let them exert themselves with all their power, for they will find it a harder task to "kick against the pricks," than to reform; as they call it, masons and sectarians,—they have undertaken a task to great for them: the arm of Omnipotence is too potent for "school boys," and this they will find after they have exhausted all their power. The "black speck" will still "stain the American character," for the people will receive the everlasting gospel, nor can men nor devils prevent it. The people may rage and the heathen imagine a vain thing; but he who sits in the heavens will laugh, the Lord will have them in derision, and ere long, he will speak to them in his wrath and vex them in his sore displeasure.

Mr. Campbell has been invited to show himself a man of principle—after repeated insults to the church of the "Latter Day Saints," and to exchange papers and cut a quill like a man; but seeing he dare not do it, (for notwithstanding the confidence which his satellites have in him, he knows the weakness of his cause too well to hazard an investigation with an Elder of the church of the "Latter Day Saints,") we consider this effort of his in the same point of light which we do a whipped spannel, when he is afraid to face his enemy, he turns his hind parts and barks—so bark on Alexander.

The following is taken from the Brookville (Ia.) Enquirer; and we copy it into the Advocate to show our friends the different feeling with which the elders of this church are received. All we have to say now on the extract, is that the Editor *could not* have been a sectarian—We judge him to be a Republican, and a gentleman.

[Editor.]

"The Latter day Saints, or Mormons.

On last Saturday evening, for the first time, in this place, a gentleman, and minister belonging to this new sect, preached in the court house, to a very respectable audience; and discoursed briefly on the various subjects connected with his creed; explained his faith and gave a brief history of the book of Mormon—united it with the Holy Bible, &c.

By request, he tarried over Sabbath, and at 2 o'clock again opened public worship by an able address to the Throne of the Most High. He spoke for about an hour and a half to a very large audience, during which time he explained many important passages of the prophecies contained in the Old & New Testaments, and applied them according to their *literal* meaning. He was not lame in the attempt, and in a succinct and lucid manner imparted his belief to the audience.

He believes the book of Mormon to be a series of revelations, and other matters appertaining to the Ephraimites, Lamanites,

&c; whom he believes to have been the original settlers of this continent; and that an ancient Prophet caused the plates from which the book of Mormon was translated to be buried nearly two thousand years ago, in what is now called Ontario county, New-York. He is also of the belief that Joseph Smith was cited to the plates by an angel from Heaven, and endowed with the gift to translate the engraving upon them into the known language of the country.

This book, he is of opinion, is an event intended to prepare for the great work, the second appearance of Christ, when he shall stand on the Mount of Olives, attended by Abraham and all the Saints, to reign on the Earth for the space of a thousand years.

After he had closed his discourse, on Sabbath afternoon, he remarked that if "no one had any thing to say, the meeting would be considered as closed." Rev. Daniel St. John, a clergyman of the universal order, ascended the pulpit and in his usual eloquent strain held forth for a considerable time; taking exceptions to some of the positions of the preceding speaker—more particularly as regarded his belief as to the second appearance of Christ, and his doctrine of future rewards and punishments. An interesting debate of about three hours ensued in which each had four hearings, and at the request of the audience, a division of the house was called for on the merits of the argument, and carried in favor of the Latter Day Saint by an overwhelming vote.

Though in some things he characterised the fanatic; yet, in the main, his doctrines were sound and his positions tenable. We would do injustice to the gentleman were we to omit stating, that in all the discourses, of the like character, that we have ever heard it has never fallen to our lot to hear so much harmony in the arrangement of quotations from the sacred book. No passage could be referred to that would in the least produce discord in his arguments. The whole of his discourses were delivered in a very clear and concise manner, rendering it obvious that he was thoroughly acquainted with the course he believed he was called upon to pursue, in obedience to his Master's will.

If a man may be called eloquent who transfers his own views and feelings into the breasts of others—if a knowledge of the subject, and to speak without fear—are a part of the more elevated rules of eloquence, we have no hesitancy in saying ORSON PRATT was eloquent; and truly verified the language of Boileau: "What we clearly conceive, we can clearly express."

LETTER IV.

To W. W. Phelps, Esq.

DEAR BROTHER:—

In my last, published in the 3d No. of the Advocate I apologized for the brief manner in which I should be obliged to give, in many instances, the history of this church. Since then yours of Christmas has been received. It was not my

wish to be understood that I could not give the leading items of every important occurrence, at least so far as would effect my duty to my fellowmen, in such as contained important information upon the subject of doctrine, and as would render it intelligibly plain; but as there are, in a great house, many vessels, so in the history of a work of this magnitude, many items which would be interesting to those who follow, are forgotten. In fact, I deem every manifestation of the Holy Spirit, dictating the hearts of the saints in the way of righteousness, to be of importance, and this is one reason why I plead an apology.

You will recollect that I mentioned the time of a religious excitement, in Palmyra and vicinity to have been in the 15th year of our brother J. Smith Jr's, age—that was an error in the type—it should have been in the 17th.—You will please remember this correction, as it will be necessary for the full understanding of what will follow in time. This would bring the date down to the year 1823.

I do not deem it to be necessary to write further on the subject of this excitement. It is doubted by many whether any real or essential good ever resulted from such excitements, while others advocate their propriety with warmth.

The mind is easily called up to reflection upon a matter of such deep importance, and it is just that it should be; but there is a regret occupying the heart when we consider the deep anxiety of thousands, who are led away with a vain imagination, or a groundless hope, no better than the idle wind or the spider's web.

But if others were not benefited, our brother was urged forward and strengthened in the determination to know for himself of the certainty and reality of pure and holy religion.—And it is only necessary for me to say, that while this excitement continued, he continued to call upon the Lord in secret for a full manifestation of divine approbation, and for, to him, the all important information, if a Supreme being did exist, to have an assurance that he was accepted of him. This, most assuredly, was correct—it was right. The Lord has said, long since, and his word remains steadfast, that to him who knocks it shall

be opened, & whosoever will, may come and partake of the waters of life freely.

To deny a humble penitent sinner a refreshing draught from this most pure of all fountains, and most desirable of all refreshments, to a thirsty soul, is a matter for the full performance of which the sacred record stands pledged. The Lord never said—"Come unto me, all ye that labor, and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest," to turn a deaf ear to those who were weary, when they call upon him. He never said, by the mouth of the prophet—"Ho, every one that thirsts, come ye to the waters," without passing it as a firm decree, at the same time, that he that should after come, should be filled with a joy unspeakable. Neither did he manifest by the Spirit to John upon the isle—"Let him that is athirst, come," and command him to send the same abroad, under any other consideration, than that "whosoever would, might take the water of life freely," to the remotest ages of time, or while there was a sinner upon his footstool.

These sacred and important promises are looked upon in our day as being given, either to another people, or in a figurative form, and consequently require *spiritualizing*, notwithstanding they are as conspicuously plain, and are meant to be understood according to their *literal* reading, as those passages which teach us of the creation of the world, and of the decree of its Maker to bring its inhabitants to judgment. But to proceed with my narrative.—

On the evening of the 21st of September, 1823, previous to retiring to rest, our brother's mind was unusually wrought up on the subject which had so long agitated his mind—his heart was drawn out in fervent prayer, and his whole soul was so lost to every thing of a temporal nature, that earth, to him, had lost its charms, and all he desired was to be prepared in heart to commune with some kind messenger who could communicate to him the desired information of his acceptance with God.

At length the family retired, and he, as usual, bent his way, though in silence, where others might have rested their weary frames "locked fast in sleep's embrace;" but repose had fled,

and accustomed slumber had spread her refreshing hand over others beside him—he continued still to pray—his heart, though once hard and obdurate, was softened, and that mind which had often flitted, like the “wild bird of passage,” had settled upon a determined basis not to be decoyed or driven from its purpose.

In this situation hours passed unnumbered—how many or how few I know not, neither is he able to inform me; but supposes it must have been eleven or twelve, and perhaps later, as the noise and bustle of the family, in retiring, had long since ceased.—While continuing in prayer for a manifestation in some way that his sins were forgiven; endeavoring to exercise faith in the scriptures, on a sudden a light like that of day, only of a purer and far more glorious appearance and brightness, burst into the room.—Indeed, to use his own description, the first sight was as though the house was filled with consuming and unquenchable fire. This sudden appearance of a light so bright, as must naturally be expected, occasioned a shock or sensation, visible to the extremities of the body. It was, however, followed with a calmness and serenity of mind, and an overwhelming rapture of joy that surpassed understanding, and in a moment a personage stood before him.

Notwithstanding the room was previously filled with light above the brightness of the sun, as I have before described, yet there seemed to be an additional glory surrounding or accompanying this personage, which shone with an increased degree of brilliancy, of which he was in the midst; and though his countenance was as lightening, yet it was of a pleasing, innocent and glorious appearance, so much so, that every fear was banished from the heart, and nothing but calmness pervaded the soul.

It is no easy task to describe the appearance of a messenger from the skies—indeed, I doubt there being an individual clothed with perishable clay, who is capable to do this work. To be sure, the Lord appeared to his apostles after his resurrection, and we do not learn as they were in the least diffcultied to look upon him; but from John's description upon Patmos, we learn that he is there represented as

most glorious in appearance; and from other items in the sacred scriptures we have the fact recorded where *angels* appeared and conversed with men, and there was no difficulty on the part of the individuals, to endure their presence; and others where their glory was so conspicuous that they could not endure. The last description or appearance is the one to which I refer, when I say that it is no easy task to describe their glory.

But it may be well to relate the particulars as far as given—The stature of this personage was a little above the common size of men in this age; his garment was perfectly white, and had the appearance of being without seam.

Though fear was banished from his heart, yet his surprise was no less when he heard him declare himself to be a messenger sent by commandment of the Lord, to deliver a special message, and to witness to him that his sins were forgiven, and that his prayers were heard; and that the scriptures might be fulfilled, which say—“God has chosen the foolish things of the world to confound the things which are mighty; and base things of the world, and things which are despised, has God chosen; yea, and things which are not, to bring to nought things which are, that no flesh should glory in his presence. Therefore, says the Lord, I will proceed to do a marvelous work among this people, even a marvelous work and a wonder; the wisdom of their wise shall perish, and the understanding of their prudent shall be hid; for according to his covenant which he made with his ancient saints, his people, the house of Israel, must come to a knowledge of the gospel, and own that Messiah whom their fathers rejected, and with them the fulness of the Gentiles be gathered in, to rejoice in one fold under one Shepherd.”

“This cannot be brought about until first certain preparatory things are accomplished, for so has the Lord purposed in his own mind. He has therefore chosen you as an instrument in his hand to bring to light that which shall perform his act, his strange act, and bring to pass a marvelous work and a wonder. Wherever the sound shall go it shall cause the ears of men to tingle, and wherever it shall be proclaimed, the pure in heart shall rejoice,

while those who draw near to God with their mouths, and honor him with their lips, while their hearts are far from him, will seek its overthrow, and the destruction of those by whose hands it is carried. Therefore, marvel not if your name is made a derision, and had as a by-word among such, if you are the instrument in bringing it, by the gift of God, to the knowledge of the people."

He then proceeded and gave a general account of the promises made to the fathers, and also gave a history of the aborigines of this country, and said they were literal descendants of Abraham. He represented them as once being an enlightened and intelligent people, possessing a correct knowledge of the gospel, and the plan of restoration and redemption. He said this history was written and deposited not far from that place, and that it was our brother's privilege, if obedient to the commandments of the Lord, to obtain, and translate the same by the means of the Urim and Thummim, which were deposited for that purpose with the record.

"Yet," said he, "the scripture must be fulfilled before it is translated, which says that the words of a book, which were sealed, were presented to the learned; for thus has God determined to leave men without excuse, and show to the meek that his arm is not shortened that it cannot save."

A part of the book was sealed, and was not to be opened yet. The sealed part, said he, contains the same revelation which was given to John upon the isle of Patmos, and when the people of the Lord are prepared, and found worthy, then it will be unfolded unto them.

On the subject of bringing to light the unsealed part of this record, it may be proper to say, that our brother was expressly informed, that it must be done with an eye single to the glory of God; if this consideration did not wholly characterize all his proceedings in relation to it, the adversary of truth would overcome him, or at least prevent his making that proficiency in this glorious work which he otherwise would.

While describing the place where the record was deposited, he gave a minute relation of it, and the vision of his mind being opened at the same

time, he was permitted to view it critically; and previously being acquainted with the place, he was able to follow the direction of the vision, afterward, according to the voice of the angel, and obtain the book.

I close for the present by subscribing myself as ever, your brother in Christ.

OLIVER COWDERY.

Kirtland, Ohio, Feb. 27, 1835.

Having been requested by the Trustees of the "KIRTLAND SCHOOL," to give a small sketch of the number of students who have attended this institution, and of their progress in the different sciences, I cheerfully comply with the request, having been an instructor therein from its commencement, in Dec.—last.

The school has been conducted under the immediate care and inspection of

JOSEPH SMITH jr. }
F. G. WILLIAMS, }
SIDNEY RIGDON, }
O. COWDERY. }

Trustees

When the school first commenced, we received into it both large and small, but in about three weeks the classes became so large, and the house so crowded, that it was thought advisable to dismiss all the small students, and continue those only who wished to study the sciences of penmanship, arithmetic, English grammar and geography. Before we dismissed the small scholars, there were in all about 130 who attended. Since that time there have been, upon an average, about 100, the most of whom have received lectures upon English grammar; and for the last four weeks about 70 have been studying geography one half the day, and grammar and writing the other part.

T. Burdick's arithmetic, S. Kirkham's grammar and J. Olney's geography have been used, with N. Webster's dictionary, as standard.

Since the year 1827 I have taught school in five different States, and I have visited many schools in which I was not engaged, as teacher; but in none, I can say with certainty, have I seen students make more rapid progress, than in this. I expect myself to leave the institution, but yet, I have a great desire to see it flourish. I therefore most cheerfully recommend it to all those whose circumstances and situation will allow them to attend, as being a place where strict attention is paid to good morals as well as to the sciences.

W. E. McLELLIN.

Notice.—The spring term of the "Kirtland School" will commence on the 20th of April next. Young gentlemen and ladies from a distance can obtain board, in respectable families for \$1,00 to \$1,25 per week.

The Trustees of this institution design introducing the higher branches of English literature, at as early a period as possible.

[Editor.]

THE LATTER DAY SAINTS'
Messenger and Advocate,
IS EDITED BY
OLIVER COWDERY,

And published every month at Kirtland, Geauga Co. Ohio, by

F. G. WILLIAMS & Co.

At \$1, per an. in advance. Every person procuring ten new subscribers, and forwarding \$10, current money, shall be entitled to a paper one year, gratis. All letters to the Editor, or Publishers, must be

POST PAID. □

No subscription will be received for a less term than one year, and no paper discontinued till all arrearages are paid, except at the option of the publishers.