



TO ONE OVERTAKEN BY DOUBT.

(Extracts from a letter written by the Church Historian Walter W. Smith.)

Dear Brother: Your letter to the First Presidency has been handed to me for answer. I am very sorry to hear that you have fallen into doubts of the kind described in your letter. It would seem to me that any man who has had a witness to the divinity of this latter-day work would be able to discern some of the errors presented in the arguments against the church which seem to have given you great distress.

Taking up the matter in the order in which you present it in your letter, I would like to say, Brother ——, that the early *Heralds* of which you speak are not hard to find at all. I have three sets of these *Heralds* which belong to me personally. There are in the Library, four more sets, and in the Presidency's office there is another set. In the Bishop's office will be found two sets, besides which there are one or two sets of *Heralds* for 1860 in our vault. I know of at least a dozen men who have the 1860 *Heralds*. It certainly could not have been that anybody would try to keep you from finding out what was actually published in these *Heralds*. In fact, Brother ——, I sent the five volumes of *Heralds* which you had the privilege of reading. I was anxious that you should read them. I am sure that no one has ever attempted to deny what was published in those *Heralds*, if they were well informed. Certainly most of our men know all about them.

Now, there is not anything in those *Her-*

alds to be either ashamed of or afraid of. In the first *Herald*, January, 1860, the first article after the announcement of the publishing committee is an article on "Polygamy Contrary to the Revelations of God." It is an unsigned statement, being a clipping from the *Saturday Evening Post* of 1852, and in the original publication it appeared over the signature of Isaac Sheen. This was Isaac Sheen's idea of polygamy and its origin. He was not living at Nauvoo at the time the things happened about which he writes. Isaac Sheen's information as to what happened at Nauvoo, the origin of polygamy, the burning of the revelation, and all that was purely hearsay. He was a good man. He believed what he wrote to be true, but he was mistaken, as many other good men are mistaken. He was full of doubts because some one told him that Joseph Smith was a bad man; but other good men have felt that doubt and have said that they believed Joseph Smith was responsible for polygamy, and they were mistaken. Joseph Smith was not responsible for polygamy.

On page 22 of *this same first number* of the *Herald* there is an article entitled, "Opposition to Polygamy, by the Prophet Joseph." This article is signed by William Marks, and dated at Shabbonas, Illinois, October 23, 1859. In this letter Brother Marks says definitely that Joseph Smith was opposed to polygamy and that he was satisfied it was a cursed doctrine, and that he would go before the congregations and proclaim against it, and William Marks was to go into the High Council and prefer charges

against those in transgression. This does not indicate that Joseph Smith was responsible for polygamy or had any interest in it. Emma Smith, wife of Joseph Smith, said she did not burn the revelation on polygamy, that she did not see any revelation on polygamy, so Isaac Sheen must be mistaken.

You speak of a revelation directing some one to go to Toronto and sell the copyright to the Book of Mormon. There was no mention made of this revelation by David Whitmer until 1887. David Whitmer was a very old man, a feeble old man. I believe he would tell the truth as near as he knew it, but he did not write his tract. One John J. Snyder wrote it. Of course, David Whitmer dictated much of it and perhaps thought that he was dictating all of it, but a careful reading will show that he testifies to things in his Address which are at variance with his earlier testimony, and the testimony of others who knew. I do not say this in criticism of David Whitmer as an honest man. I believe that he told the truth as near as he could recollect it wherever he spoke, but I think much has been blamed on David Whitmer that he was not at all guilty of.

You say that you are willing to take the testimony of these three witnesses and that their testimony would judge the world in the last day. How about Oliver Cowdery, who was estranged from the church at the same time David Whitmer was, but who subsequently sought reconciliation and was rebaptized? How about Martin Harris, who never left the church, but removed to Utah and died there in 1875? Do you want to follow their testimony? Each was just as much a witness to the Book of Mormon as David Whitmer was. It would be impossible to follow all three, for they went in three directions. Now, I am not saying this to criticize these three witnesses, for the thing that God called them to testify to, viz, the truth of the Book of Mormon, they testified to always and never deviated therefrom. But concerning other

matters they had their opinions just the same as other men, and their opinions were no better than those of other men.

I do not know any reason why the "head men of the church" should tell you different stories about why David Whitmer left the church." You can turn to page 150, volume 2, of the Church History, and read for yourself. The charges preferred against David Whitmer were: 1. For not observing the Word of Wisdom. 2. For unchristianlike conduct in refraining from attending meetings. 3. For writing letters to the dissenters in Kirtland unfavorable to the cause and the character of Joseph Smith. 4. For neglecting the duties of his calling and separating himself from the church while he yet had a name among us. 5. For signing himself, "President of the Church of Christ" in an insulting letter to the High Council after he had been cut off from the Presidency. Perhaps we would not take such drastic action now. Men are kinder now in their church actions than they were then. They have learned more. They appreciate more nearly the meaning of being representatives of Christ. Back there they acted in all good faith and no doubt did the best they could.

I am not surprised that you have gotten hold of a reprint of the old Book of Commandments, as I sold more than 100 at the last General Conference. But why should you be surprised to learn that there was a difference between it and the Book of Covenants? That was why these books were sold, to show what the difference was, and to assist people in answering the criticisms that are made against these revelations. The difficulty in this matter arises from the fact that you *supposed* that the revelations were published *correctly* in the *Book of Commandments*, when Oliver Cowdery, one of the three witnesses and whose word you ought to be willing to accept, says they were very sorry they made such errors in the printing of the revelations in the Book of Commandments,

and that they had now gotten the originals and were publishing the Book of Covenants from the originals exactly as God had given them. John Whitmer, David's brother, assisted in copying these revelations and subsequently testified, as you can find in the Book of Doctrine and Covenants, section 108A, that the Book of Doctrine and Covenants was true. W. W. Phelps, who printed the Book of Commandments, also testified, as you will find in the same section of the Doctrine and Covenants, that the Book of Covenants was correct.

Now, brother, let me tell you what I think. I think when a good man makes a mistake and apologizes for it he ought to be forgiven and the mistake held no more against him. That is what Oliver Cowdery did, and I believe he was a man of God. He printed the revelations in the Book of Commandments wrong. He said so, (*Messenger and Advocate*, volume 1, pages 16 and 28.) He said he was sorry, and that he was publishing them correctly now because he had the originals. Now, why should you want to go back and use the faulty revelations, those that were changed, and the ones Oliver Cowdery, the witness of God, said were changed, instead of the correct ones printed the way God gave them? It seems to me that you should be awfully careful not to use the changed ones, if it is going to bring such a curse as having your name taken out of the Book of Life, etc.

Joseph Smith says in 1835 in a letter published in the *Messenger and Advocate*, that the Bible, Book of Mormon, and the Doctrine and Covenants contain the three measures of meal into which God had placed the divine leaven, the Word of God, and that they would leaven the whole lump. Our trouble is that we are willing to follow men rather than the word of God. There is no conflict between the Bible, the Book of Mormon, and the Doctrine and Covenants. The conflict is with the strange testimony that somebody

says that somebody else testified concerning these early days.

Concerning the One Mighty and Strong. I think you will have a great deal of difficulty in proving that the choice seer was to be a Lamanite. That was an afterthought of men who had lost the Spirit of God and his work, and had gone out of the church. In the original manuscript of the Book of Mormon the reading is very clear, in the prophecy of Joseph concerning the fruit of his loins. It was not the fruit of Lehi's or Nephi's loins, but the fruit of Joseph's loins, (Joseph of Egypt), that was to produce the choice seer. Our people should be careful that they read from the correct records instead of from a Brighamite or some other corrupted record. The Brighamite Book of Mormon is wrong on that point.

Now, in conclusion, Brother ———. The Reorganized Church has nothing to cover up, nothing to hide, no false doctrine to conceal. It is all an open book. We are building on the foundation that God established in 1830, and building according to the revelation of God's divine will, and we hold ourselves ready to continue to build in the manner that God directs. The authority was not lost to the church. The church became careless and corrupt at Nauvoo, and God rejected it. In section 107, he said he would if the Saints did not do his will. They did not do his will and were rejected and driven away; but wherever any man held the Melchisedec priesthood and lived his religion he held authority to act in the name of God and to build up the kingdom of God and his Christ. David Whitmer did not claim when he left the church in 1838 that he had gone out to hold the priesthood. This claim came in 1873 when William E. McLellin baptized him over again and ordained him a high priest; the very thing that he afterward claimed was not provided for in the law.

You have authority from God unless you have committed some crime, and nobody sus-

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pects that. You are only afflicted with doubts. You ought to dispel these and lay hold of the promise of God. Remember that you are a servant of Jesus Christ and a minister in his church, and that you owe it to God, to yourself, and to the world to bear witness to the truth divine restored in these latter days. God will hold you to account for the manner in which you do it. Remember, Peter was full of doubts once, and he cursed and swore that he didn't know his Lord. He then said, "We thought this was he that should redeem Israel: let's go fishing." But Jesus forgave him and said, "Do you love me, Peter?" And when Peter assured him, he said, "Feed my sheep." Your witness to the divinity of the latter-day work ought to be your main stay. You ought to arise in the strength of Israel's God and defend the truth against the errors of these so-called witnesses who get things all confused.

"THEREFORE I LIVE."

Ontario, California, January 22.

Mr. J. W. Rushton,

Los Angeles, California.

Dear Brother: I went to San Bernardino yesterday and spoke morning and evening to fair sized crowds. My subject in the morning was "Life," in which I tried to show that the possession of material things in abundance, such as elegant homes, etc., though legitimate and desired by all of us, does not

supply the greater portion of that happy and great life desired by most persons; but that life is bounded by our mental or spiritual thoughts and consciences. In the language of Descartes, "I think, therefore I live." Christ told the Rich Young Man to sell; not buy, to obtain that life.

They all wanted to hear of the islands, so I found opportunity here to tell of island life, physical, as lived by the natives and ourselves; and testified that during our stay there that my family and myself experienced life in a very highly agreeable form.

In the evening I found a theme revealed in the case of Mrs. and Mr. Harrington. The woman, you know, who tried to coerce her husband to unite with her church by instituting a fast which she insisted she would not break until he was baptized. I examined her method, suggesting the proper way, then examined the husband's position, which was that the Golden Rule was good enough for him. This view I called the greatest deception of the age, for salvation never was based on obedience to a moral code alone without regard to an organized body and effort.

Since the war we have heard of how the churches are emptying themselves, and as far as I can see it is because of a general idea held by the masses that it does not matter much what organization a man may belong to, that as long as he lives righteously that he will be saved and be rewarded for all the good that he has done, etc. So the people have gone the preachers of that theory, and they are not a few, one point better by demonstrating that they can do as well without any organization at all. I think the preachers have reaped as they sowed, and they themselves have emptied their churches. This line gave me a good opportunity to open up on the functions of the organized church, and the necessity of men entering it.

(Extract from letter of A. H. Christensen.)