

## History and Doctrines of the Latter-day Saints.

[The following historical sketch was written by Orson Pratt, Church Historian, in Dec., 1874, for insertion in the *Universal Cyclopaedia*. It is now forwarded for publication in the NEWS.]

**LATTER-DAY SAINTS.**—This is the common name of a religious organization, having its origin in the present century. The name, when stated in full, is, "The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints." The Saints believe that this name was given by divine revelation.

The distinguished individual, who was the honored instrument in laying the foundation of the Church, was received by its members as an inspired prophet, a chosen seer, a revelator, a translator of ancient records, a great apostle, holding the keys of power to build up the kingdom of God on the earth for the last time, and for the fulness of times.

Like Samuel of old, Joseph Smith, Jr., was called in his childhood, while his mind was yet unwarping by the false theories, traditions and creeds of uninspired men; he was called to do a work, marvelous in its nature and wonderful in its results. A biographical sketch of one so endeared to the Saints, and so celebrated in modern times cannot be uninteresting. Mr. Smith was born in the town of Sharon, Windsor County, Vermont, Dec. 23, 1805. When ten years old, his parents and family moved to Palmyra, New York, in the vicinity of which he resided about eleven years. During the latter part of this period, he dwelt in the town of Manchester. Farming was his occupation. His education was very limited. It is true, he could read without much difficulty, and write a very imperfect hand, and had a slight knowledge of the elementary rules of arithmetic, but these were his highest and only scholastic attainments.

When about fourteen years of age he began seriously to reflect upon the necessity of being prepared for a future state of existence. Seeing the contentions among the religious denominations in his neighborhood he was at a loss to know which among them all was the true Christian Church. While in this state of uncertainty, he began to peruse the Scriptures, where he found the following comforting passage—"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." From this promise he learned that it was the privilege of all men to ask God for wisdom, with the greatest assurance that they should receive. He, therefore, retired to a secret place in a grove, but a short distance from his father's house, and knelt down, and began to pray, asking God to reveal to him where he might find the true church. While exercised in this sacred duty, he saw a bright and most glorious light in the heavens above, which at first seemed to be at a considerable distance. He continued praying, while the light appeared to be gradually descending towards him; and as it drew nearer, it increased in brightness and magnitude, so that by the time it had reached the tops of the trees, the whole wilderness, for some distance around was illuminated with great brilliancy. So intense was this light that he was apprehensive, that the leaves and boughs of the trees would be consumed by the contact, but perceiving that no such effect was produced, he was encouraged with the hopes that he would be able to endure its presence. It continued descending slowly, until he was enveloped in the midst of it. When it first came upon him, it produced a peculiar sensation throughout his whole system, and immediately his mind was caught away from the natural objects with which he was surrounded, and was enveloped in a heavenly vision; he saw two glorious personages by whom he was informed that his sins were forgiven, that the religious sects were not right, that they had all gone out of the way, and that he must not join any of them. He was promised that, in due time, the true doctrine of Christ—the fulness of the gospel, should be revealed to him, and through him to the world; after which the vision withdrew, leaving his mind in a state of calmness and peace indescribable.

About four years after, on the evening of the 21st of September, 1823, while engaged in prayer, it pleased God to send an holy angel to him. The brightness of the light surrounding this personage, and the glory of his countenance, were beyond the power of language to describe; his stature 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.

This celestial messenger informed Mr. Smith that his prayers were heard, that his sins were forgiven, and that he was called and chosen to bring forth a sacred record, engraved by ancient prophets on metallic plates. Having obtained this sacred book, and translated by the power of God the same, he published the first edition early in 1830.

On the 15th of May, 1829, while engaged in the work of translation, Mr. Smith and his scribe, Oliver Cowdery, became deeply impressed upon the subject of water baptism. They found that the form and object of baptism, and the authority necessary to administer this divine ordinance, were clearly taught by our Savior in person, among the ancient Israelites of America. They earnestly desired to attend to this important duty, but, knowing that the uninspired teachers of modern times, were without divine authority, they were at a loss how to receive the ordinance legally. They retired by themselves, and earnestly besought the Lord to show them what to do. While thus praying, an angel in his glory appeared, and, laying his hands upon their heads, he ordained them to the Aaronic priesthood. He informed them that his name was John, the same who, in ancient times, came to prepare the way before the first coming of the Messiah. He told them that the priesthood which he conferred upon them had power to baptize in water, for the remission of sins, but had no authority to administer the higher ordinance of the laying on of the hands for the baptism of fire and the Holy Ghost. Having received authority, and also a commandment, these two young men baptized each other, and were filled with great joy, and also with the spirit of prophecy.

A few months after, they began to seriously consider the importance of receiving those greater blessings of the gospel, which the priesthood of John, the Baptist, had not the right to confer. They again sought, in humble prayer, for a restoration to the earth of the higher authority, when, to their great joy, three of the ancient apostles, Peter, James, and John, appeared to them, and ordained them to the apostleship, giving them the full authority to confirm baptized believers, by the laying on of hands for the reception of the Holy Ghost, and to administer in all the higher ordinances of the gospel.

Having baptized a few penitent believers, they, by divine command, on the 6th of April, 1830, organized the church, in Fayette, Seneca county, New York, consisting only of six members.

During the next six months, several other small branches were organized in the same State. In the following autumn, four missionaries were sent by divine revelation, given through Joseph the Prophet, to the western boundaries of the State of Missouri. On their way they preached in the northern part of Ohio, and in a few weeks succeeded in baptizing several and establishing a branch of the Church, many of whom resided in Kirtland. Several of these new converts were called and ordained to the priesthood, and went forth in all directions, preaching the word. Many, by the power of God, and in the name of Jesus, were healed; devils were cast out; the lame were made to walk; the spirit of prophecy was abundantly manifested; the heavens were opened to some; visions of the future were seen; while angels ministered to and comforted many. Thus the word of God was confirmed to the believers by signs following.

In January, 1831, a revelation was given, requiring all the Saints in the east to emigrate to Ohio; this, in the following spring, was generally obeyed. Kirtland became the residence of the prophet, and the headquarters of the Saints. Many revelations continued to be given on a great variety of subjects; these, in due time, were compiled and published.

In the summer of 1831, a large number of missionaries were sent by revelation, through the western

States, being commanded to go two by two, preaching, baptizing, and confirming, until they should arrive in Jackson county, Missouri, where they should receive further instructions. Joseph the prophet was commanded to proceed to the same place; there a number of revelations were given and written, making known the great designs of the Almighty in relation to that land. It was pointed out as the place where a great city should be built, called the New Jerusalem, to which the righteous of all nations should eventually be gathered. The precise location was designated on which a temple should be reared, which should be honored with the presence of the Lord, and be covered with his glory, in the form of a cloud, as in ancient times. The land was dedicated, a corner stone of the temple laid, when the missionaries separated, and returned to Ohio.

The Saints having learned the will of the Lord, began to gather to that choice land, where they purchased thousands of acres, and built themselves comfortable homes. In the meantime, persecutions began to rage, increasing in violence, until some of the Saints were tied up to trees and whipped in the most shocking manner; others were shot down; merchandise, household furniture, bedding, clothing, &c., were robbed, destroyed, or strewn in the streets; stacks of hay and grain were burned; cattle were shot down for sport; about two hundred houses were burned, or otherwise destroyed, and finally about 1,200 Saints were driven across the Missouri River into Clay County. All this happened in a little over two years from the first settlement of the Saints in the country. During this period, the Saints had conducted themselves as good and quiet citizens; and, although their persecutors held all the civil offices of the county, there was not one case of crime against the Saints, to be found on their court records. In this persecution, sectarian priests acted a very conspicuous part; the Lieut. Governor of the State, and nearly all the civil and military officers of the county, were leaders of the mob, and urged them on to deeds of murderous violence.

The exiled Saints next began to make themselves homes in Clay County, Missouri, but only a few months elapsed before they were again compelled to flee.

They next located in Caldwell and Davis counties, where but a very few settlers had preceded them. Here by emigration, they increased, in a few years to about 15,000 souls. In the meantime, their former persecutors, finding themselves not brought to justice, and punished for their crimes, began to stir up the people in all the surrounding counties, to arise in mass, and drive the Saints from the State. They succeeded in electing Lieut. Governor Boggs to the highest office in the State, when he again renewed his high-handed persecutions, issuing an exterminating order, raised an army of several thousand volunteers, placed at their head, as chief officers, some of the most violent mobocrats, and sent them against the peaceable settlements of the Saints.

Then commenced a series of butcheries in the thinly populated districts, too horrible for pen to describe. Men, women and children were massacred, and while struggling in the agonies of death, their clothing, boots, &c., were greedily wrenched from their mangled bodies, and distributed among their murderers. Women were taken and bound fast, and in this helpless condition were brutally ravished by great numbers. Joseph the prophet and many of the leading ministers of the Saints were thrust into prison, where they were offered the human flesh of their murdered brethren for food. Among the most unrelenting, cruel, and blood-thirsty of these persecutors were many priests, of different denominations, seventeen of whom so strenuously urged the shooting of the principal men, that it would have been carried into effect, had not Genl. Doniphan threatened to withdraw his regiment, and wash his hands from such cold-blooded, murderous proceedings.

In the Winter of 1835, and 1839 the Saints, by mobocratic violence, were driven from their homes and from the State. The sufferings of women and children were indescribable; through hunger and exposure to the pitiless storms of Winter, great numbers perished. The

dwellings, improvements and lands, owned by these suffering exiles, were forcibly taken possession of, and are still occupied by these public robbers and their descendants, while the real owners have received no remuneration to the present day.

In the Spring of 1839, these homeless, homeless, exiled citizens of this great republic, sought refuge in Illinois. The great majority, locating themselves in Hancock county, built a city on the bank of the Mississippi River, which they called Nauvoo—a Hebrew word for beautiful. Here they enjoyed peace for the next three or four years, during which they laid the foundation of a temple. Their numbers annually increased, by the emigration of the Saints from the States and from England.

But soon the mobocratic spirit of Missouri, receiving no check, spread itself into Illinois. Violent persecution began to rage; the leaders of the Saints were threatened with death; another total expulsion was threatened; the prophet and his brother, while under the pledge of safety from the Governor of Illinois, were permitted to be cruelly murdered by a brutal mob, in the broad light of day. This occurred in June, 1844. During the following two years, all the horrors of the Missouri persecution were re-enacted in Illinois. Not satisfied with a mere expulsion from the State, they clamored for something still more terrible—an expulsion from the United States. They compelled the Saints to enter into a written agreement to flee to the desert wilds beyond the Rocky Mountains.

In the Winter of 1846, this forcible exodus began to take place. Hundreds were seen crossing the great Mississippi on the ice. Thousands of men, women and children were seen wallowing through the snow-drifts of Iowa, exposed to the piercing cold of a temperature twenty degrees of Fahrenheit below zero. Fifty miles from their homes brought them to the uninhabited region of Iowa, where, without roads, bridges, or ferries, they pursued their weary march, for several months, until they reached the Omaha Indian lands, on the west bank of the Missouri River.

While here, their camp was overtaken by an express from the General Government, requiring 500 of their best men to assist the United States against Mexico. They were, without hesitation, furnished. This so crippled the camp, that they could not, for the time being, proceed further. In the meantime an express reached them, from Nauvoo, from which they learned that several hundred of the poor and the sick, who were unable to leave with the main body, were actually cannonaded out of the city, and driven by mob violence across the river, and compelled to wander without aid or succor on the western track of the leading companies. The main body were compelled, by the circumstances above named, to enter into Winter quarters. Hundreds of the Saints, through their intense sufferings and untold hardships, had sunk down and perished by the way.

Agate, the dwellings, improvements, lands, and other property fell into the hands of mobocrats, and for which the Saints have received no remuneration or redress whatever.

In the Spring of 1847, one hundred and forty-three pioneers were selected from the camp, and sent in advance to explore the great Basin, beyond the Rocky Mountains, then a Mexican province. Arriving in Salt Lake Valley in July, they immediately put a few garden seeds into the soil, by way of experiment, and then commenced surveying the city plot of Salt Lake City.

About the first of September, some of the pioneers started on their return journey, meeting near the South Pass several thousands of the Saints, on their way to some unknown land, where they hoped to enjoy peace. They received the pioneers' reports with gladness, and with increased courage proceeded on towards their destined home. The returning pioneers, reached their families, near the Missouri River in November.

A provisional state government was formed, a constitution framed, and application made to the general Government for admission into the Union. This was denied, but a territorial government was enforced upon them, giving to the federal Governor an absolute vetoing power of every law, though passed by the unanimous voice of the legislature.

In 1857, through the false reports of federal officials, President James Buchanan ordered an army to Utah at an expense of many millions of dollars, but afterwards sent a commission to investigate the charges, who, finding them without any foundation, reported accordingly; and the Chief Magistrate kindly forgave all the sins of the Utonians for mildly resisting this high-handed oppression.

During twenty-seven years occupancy, the population of the Territory has increased, as is supposed, to about 150,000, of which about eleven-twelfths are Latter-day Saints. Between one hundred and two hundred villages and small cities have been built; woollen and cotton manufactories erected; furnaces for the manufacture of iron established; smelting and refining works for the reduction of the ores of precious metals are becoming numerous. All the principal towns and settlements, for 400 miles, are connected by telegraph wires. Numerous railroads have been constructed; others are being rushed forward with every prospect of a rapid completion. New mines are daily discovered, while the older ones are yielding up their rich treasures, to reward the enterprise of capitalists.

While the gathered Saints have been passing through great tribulation, marked with sudden transitions to prosperity, they have had hundreds of missionaries abroad, calling upon the nations to repent. Many have listened, believed and obeyed; tens of thousands have gathered home; tens of thousands are yet to come. And still the proclamation will be sounded, until Zion shall be numbered by millions, and become the joy of the whole earth.

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The following is a sketch of the fundamental doctrines believed by the Latter-day Saints—

They believe in God, the Eternal Father, and in his Son Jesus Christ, and in the Holy Ghost, who bears record of them; the same throughout all ages and for ever.

They believe that all mankind are fallen beings, in consequence of the original sin of our first parents; that Christ atoned, not only for the original sin, but for the sins of the whole world; that infants are redeemed through the atonement, without faith, repentance, baptism, or any other works; that all who have arrived to the age of accountability, and have sinned against the known law of God, can be redeemed into the fulness of the glory of the celestial kingdom by the atonement, only on the conditions of faith, repentance, baptism by immersion in water for the remission of sins, baptism of fire and the Holy Ghost by the laying on of the hands of the servants of God, and by living a life of holiness to the end of their days.

They believe that baptism, and all other gospel ordinances, which have been administered by uninspired men, during the last eighteen centuries, are null and void, being illegal in the sight of God; that when apostles, prophets, revelators, inspired men, and the miraculous gifts ceased on the earth, the true Christian Church ceased also to have an existence among men.

They believe that God has sent an angel from heaven with the everlasting gospel, contained in the Book of Mormon, to be preached to every nation, kindred, tongue and people; that men have been called and ordained by holy angels, to the apostleship, to whom full authority and power were given to organize the latter-day Church on the earth, preparatory to the second coming of the Messiah.

They believe that all the miraculous signs and gifts of the Holy Ghost, as promised in the gospel, are as necessary for the perfecting of the Saints now as in ancient times, without which there can be no true believers in Christ, whom he acknowledges as such.

They believe that the great message, now revealed, must be preach-