REV. MR. SWARTWOUT

The Broken Reed Upon Which He Relies in Argument.

ELDER B. H. ROBERTS' REJOINDER

Some Pointed Suggestions to the Wisconsin Preacher, as to His Extremely Inconsistent Attitude.

A letter to Mr. B. H. Roberts, 534 Constitution Building, Salt Lake City, Utah.

Dear Sir—In reply to your "open letter" in the DESERET EVENING NEWS of the 8th of May, in which you address me on the strength of what you saw in the Chicago Record of April 27, I wish very briefly but plainly to make the following statement:

1.—The paragraph from the Record is fairly correct, as a digest of my original statement. I had said: "God first took from me all hope in this present system of 'churches.'" He showed me that this apostasy, this denying the power of the Holy Spirit, this preferring false doctrine, this being an amusement bureau for the world, was all to be expected in these "last days." "The presence of the unregenerate in the pulpits and at the Lord's table today, is most horrifying." Then the shortened report you saw does injustice in that this in the conclusion was omitted: "Christ's separation from all that system of things in His day, is a point in hand." Then 2 Cor. 6:14 and 17 contains the command that takes me out from this man-made ministry. Eschewing all denominationalism, I said: "Also note: I go out from you unto Christ as my Centre and Object." The Blessed God has dealt with me, to separate me from all that is of human tradition or makeshift—just unto His Name—the Only Name!

2.—Therefore, in view of this, you will see how utterly groundless is your proffer. I am free, no more to be entangled with the yoke of human bondage. I am a poor fool to jump from the fryingpan into the fire.

3.—Allow me to say, that what I look for is not the "Latter-day Saints" and their prophesyings, but the spirit-led lives and the God-taught word of life as it breathes in the Records of the Former Day Saints of God indeed, (for the New Testament records them as such, who "obeyed God rather than men"). From the old Word Standards the professing churches of Christendom have woefully departed. Back to the Standards—back to the only authority under the sun! Isa. 8:20—"To the law and to the testimony: if they speak not according to this Word, it is because there is no light in them."

4.—Lastly let me point you to a word that, in the eyes of all the true Saints of God, makes a clear case as to just where you stand, and as to just what credence men should put in you or any others, who raise a word or utter a syllable that is not in the Book of Books, the complete Revelation of God to fallen man. Please find it suggestively at the close of the last chapter of the Revelation, verses 18 and 19: "If any man shall add unto these things, God shall add unto him the plagues that are written in this Book." And also, "If any man shall take away from the words of the Book of this prophecy, God shall take away his part out of the Book of life." Paul, under God, an authority for us, wrote in Gal. 1:8—12: "But though we or an angel from heaven preach any other gospel unto you than that which we have preached unto you, let him be accursed." And this gospel he received by revelation from Jesus Christ. God's own Word is FINAL!! With prayer that God might indeed bring you under the Blood, so that God sees [seal?] the Blood over you; and then help you to be clean and pure by His Word, and to teach men so. I am, in His keeping,

FRED. R. SWARTWOUT.
West Superior, Wis., May 19, 1897.

SALT LAKE CITY, May 29, 1897.
To the Rev. Fred R. Swartwout:

Dear Sir:—Your favor of the[19th inst., replying to mine published in the DESERET NEWS of the 8th of May was received several days ago, but I took the liberty of holding it from publication until I could find the time to write out the following answer, that this too might appear in the same issue of the NEWS.

You will pardon me I am sure, if I take up the several items of your reply to my NEWS letter in the reverse order to which you have set them down. This brings me to your last item first. The question stands thus: I have before me a professed minister who announces to the world that God had shown to him the apostate condition of the Christian churches, and he proclaims himself separate forever from those man-made churches and their ministry. These facts coming to my knowledge through the public press, and knowing that God Himself more than seventy years ago had revealed to Joseph Smith the apostate condition of Christendom, and subsequently bestowed upon him and others divine authority, with a commission to preach the Gospel and build up the Church of Christ, I felt in duty bound to make these truths known to you, especially as you seemed to be at least approaching the truth. Hence my letter to you through the NEWS. And how do you treat this solemn communication of an important message from God? With patient, prayerful investigation and a desire to know the truth of it? No, but without investigation you propose to condemn it by one single reference to the Jewish scriptures. You cite me Revelation, 22nd chapter, 18th and 19th verses. I am not unfamiliar with this passage; your reference to it comes to me like the refrain of an old familiar air of a worn-out song, and convinces me that you doubtless are in contact with what the world calls Mormonism for the first time, else you would not rely with such confidence upon an argument that has been so often and is so easily exploded. Let me set it out for you at some length: "For I testify unto every man that heareth the words of the prophecy of this book, if any man shall add unto these things, God shall add unto him the plagues that are written in this book: and if any man shall take away from the words of the book of this prophecy, God shall take away his part out of the book of life, and out of the holy city, and from the things which are written in this book." [Rev. 22:18, 19.]

The Christian argument—your argument, as inferred in your letter is as follows: This passage occurs in the last book of the Bible, in the last chapter of that last book, and in the last verses but two in that last chapter; and therefore any message purporting to be a revelation from God after these words were written in the Apocalypse, is to be rejected at once, because it is a violation of this supposed formal closing up of God's complete revelation. Thus you dispose of the revelations which God gave to the world through Joseph Smith. To this cavalier reply of yours there are several answers, each of which is sufficient to destroy your premises.

First—It must be remembered that the Apocalypse was not placed as the last book of the Bible by the Apostle John or any other of the inspired writers of the New Testament; nor is it the last book of the New Testament collection that was written. It is almost the unanimous opinion of Bible scholars that the Book of Revelation was written while the Apostle John was an exile on the Island Patmos, and that he did not write his book called "The Gospel according to St. John," until after his return from Patmos. "The weight of evidence now tends to prove," says Canon Farrar, speaking of the Book of Revelation, "that it is not the last book in our chronological order; that it was written nearer the beginning than the end of St. John's period of apostolic activity among the churches of Asia; that the last accents of revelations which fall upon our ears are not those of a treatise which, though it ends in such mercy, contains so many terrible visions of blood and fire; but rather those of the gospel which tells us that the 'Word was made flesh' and of the epistle which first formulates the most blessed truth which was ever uttered to human hearts—the truth that God is love." This widely recognized Biblical scholar, you will observe, places both the gospel and the epistles of St. John after the Apocalypse in the order of their production; and in this he but voices the opinion, so far as I know, of all Bible scholarship. It therefore follows that if the words in Revelation 22nd chapter, 18th and 19th verses, mean, as you infer, that no more revelation was to be given or written, then the Apostle John himself became the violator of his own prohibition, for he wrote both his Gospel and his epistles after he wrote the Apocalypse. You sir, upon reflection, will not, I am sure, insist upon such an exegesis of the word of God as to make the Apostle himself a violator of his own and God's word. Yet he does this if your exegesis be right.

Second—The Apocalypse had no connection with the other books of the New Testament for many years after it was written; and under the most liberal construction the prohibitory words you quote could only refer to the book of Revelation alone—just the few pages that constitute that book, and not the whole Bible of which it constituted no part—at the time it was written. It must have been just the little pamphlet called Revelation the man was forbidden to add to, and not the "completed volume of God's revelations." As a matter of fact there is nothing in the scriptures anywhere that so much as hints at God's volume of revelation ever being completed and forever closed.

Third—If you will read the passage again, and with a little more attention, you will see that it is only man that is forbidden to add anything to this particular book of Revelation, not God. The language is "... any man shall add unto these things, God shall add unto him the plagues that are written in this book," etc. While this forbids man adding to this book of Revelation it nowhere seals up the mouth of God. He is still free to add revelation to revelation, and volume of scripture to volume, until He overwhelms men with the evidence of His existence, goodness and power to save. Allow me to point out another scripture very similar to the one under consideration, and even sometimes quoted in controversy with us upon this very question: "Ye shall not add to the word which I command you, neither shall ye diminish aught from it." [Deut. iv: 2.] Suppose the same line of reasoning should be applied to this passage as you apply to the prohibition to add to, or diminish from, in the book of Revelation? One would then be under the necessity of rejecting the greater part of the Bible itself.

I think, sir, you will now see how unworthy your grounds are for so summarily rejecting the great work to which I call your attention. You have, however, become an unconscious witness to the truth of that same work. For in the Book of Mormon, the history of the ancient inhabitants of this western hemisphere, revealed to the world by Joseph Smith, the Prophet, one of the ancient Prophets represents the Lord as saying: "And my words shall hiss forth unto the ends of the earth, for a standard unto my people, which are of the house of Israel. And because my word shall hiss forth, many of the Gentiles shall say a Bible! a Bible! we have got a Bible, and there cannot be any more Bible." (II Nephi, chapter 29: 2, 3.) This, sir, used to be a very common cry and the chief argument—if an argument it can be called—against the message "Mormonism" has to deliver to the world. It has been little used of late, however, because the Christian ministry have learned what a broken reed it is; and I almost ought to feel grateful to you for referring to it—since you have determined to reject the message to which in my first letter I called your attention—as it will give our young people who are not so well acquainted with this fulfillment of the old Nephite Prophet's words as their fathers were years ago, an opportunity to see that that prediction was a true prophecy.

But of all persons who ought not to have made such an objection as that contained in your reference to the closing chapter of Revelation, you, sir, are the last. The man who claims that God has showed to him the apostate condition of the present system of churches is scarcely in a condition to take any one to task for adding to the volume of God's revelation to man. Are you not somewhat afraid, my friend, that some of your orthodox brethren will be taking you to task for violating what you and they regard as God's prohibition to further revelation?

Referring briefly to your third statement to the effect that you are looking not for the "Latter-day Saints and their prophesyings, but the Spirit-led lives and the God-taught word of life as it breathes in the records of the Former-day Saints of God indeed." Further on you add: "From the old Word standards the professing churches of Christendom have woefully departed. Back to the standards—back to the only authority under the sun." It is true, my friend, you may not be looking for the Latter-day Saints and their prophesyings, but if the churches of Christendom have, as you say, woefully departed from the old Word standards; if indeed, as your attitude charges, they are in a state of apostasy, then they are without divine authority to preach the Gospel or administer its ordinances, and have been in that condition as long as their apostasy has lasted; and if you are not looking for the Latter-day Saints and their prophesyings, you ought as a consistent man to be looking for some people to whom God has restored His authority, and whom He has commissioned to preach His Gospel and establish His Church again upon the earth. To be "looking for the Spirit-led lives and the God-taught word as it breathes in the record of the Former-day Saints," is most commendable. But has it ever occurred to you, sir, that those "Spirit-led lives and the God-taught word of life as it breathes in the record of the Former-day Saints," is to be found among a people taught the Gospel by a divinely commissioned ministry who were Prophets and Apostles of God, who were continuously receiving the word of God as living oracles; and that where you find the people of "Spirit-led lives," etc., for whom you are looking, you will find them to be a people taught as the Former-day Saints were, by an inspired Priesthood, commissioned of God to proclaim His word unto the Saints and to the world; and not led by self-constituted reformers, denying the power of God, and talking with an appearance of learning about completed revelation to fallen man, to which God is to add no more? A Spirit-led people will not be instructed by such spirit-dead leaders.

In conclusion I again call your attention to the great work of God which He has established in the earth by a new dispensation of the Gospel of Jesus Christ; and which needs but a patient and prayerful investigation of its claims to learn of its truth.

Trusting that you will not be offended with the frankness with which I have pointed out what I consider your error in relying upon the passage in Revelation for your justification in rejecting the message to which I have called your attention, I am, most truly yours,

B. H. ROBERTS.

THE ABDUCTION.

I, Pavlos Mpekos, I will tell you how I took her, as the eagle takes the kid.

It was when I was a handsome pallikar, when I had a broad chest and a small waist, that there came to our village a stranger with his wife and daughter. He had cousins among our people and it was they who said to me, "He has money, this Aristides, and he is going to live in our village, Pania." They told me this with pride and pleasure, but I—I was not afraid of their great man. I had just returned from the barracks at Volo, where I had served my time and seen many great men. And as to his money, it was only when I saw his daughter Alexandra that I felt that I could spend it for him. But I said not a word. I only looked at her as she came toward the village well with a water pitcher on her head. "She is very beautiful," I thought to myself. "She treads upon air. The white skin of her arms would bring light to a dark room. Her bosom, it grows to my sight. She is round and delicious with fat." And as she drew closer to me, "She has much hair," I thought to myself. "It is black as a raven's wing; it comes close to the earth. Would that I were the earth!"

But when I saw her eyes—it was then that my heart went forth to her, and that, as I passed into them, her kourni veil dropped from before her mouth. I had lived in barracks; I knew what that meant. It was not chance; I was handsome. And I did as a man should do—I spoke to her with my eyes, while I said to myself, "You shall be mine, you and your dowry."

In the evening of the day that I had thus seen Alexandra I met her father at the inn. To offer him raki was as easy as for him to drink it. We became friends. And as friends drink when they meet, so did we drink together for many evenings at the inn. But I—I had no money, and that was the reason of the impatience that urged me quickly to his daughter. And when I had met her in the cottage of Aristides, I came there again and again. Though I came with the soul of a friend, my friendship with Aristides did not ripen. My heart came no closer to his daughter's. She was coy, I thought. And he—well, his words passed me by for Demetri. This Demetri, I did not like him. He was a sheep, not a ram, though he was of our village. But he was a sheep with a golden fleece, and this the cunning one, Aristides, had learned, as men will learn where money is.

When the bayonet is drawn from the scabbard, the world may see its steel. It was thus with the betrothal of Demetri and Alexandra, and I, Pavlos Mpekos, could see it or not, as I pleased, and this Aristides told me. For of me as son-in-law he would not hear. "You have no money," said he, "tipota" (nothing).

He spoke to me as if I was a dog, did Aristides, but I did not show my teeth—at least, not then. I went to his daughter very quietly, to where she was alone, and said, "Come, we will go to the mountains together, you and I." There were others close by, though they did not see us, when she whispered back to me: "No, I will not go. I will marry the pallikar that my father is going to give me."

It was a joke, and to call Demetri a pallikar! It was a joke, and I loved her for it; I told her so. She moved as if to go away. I took her hand. "Come," I said, "we will laugh together on the mountains, and later on we will return hither and laugh at Demetri." It was then that our words crossed like knives, and she stabbed me to the heart. She told me that she did not love me, that she had never loved me; that I, Pavlos Mpekos, was ugly, and that he, Demetri, was handsome. Could she have been more cruel? Could she have been more foolish? I, a handsome pallikar, ugly! It was absurd; it astonished me so that I let loose her hand, and she fled away.

But she was beautiful, and she had called Demetri handsome. Her words came back to me again, and they burned me till my blood was in a fever. I would do this, I would do that, but Demetri should never have her. I had a knife; I had a gun; I was brave; I was Pavlos Mpekos. And that Demetri, whom she called handsome, I would grip his breast to breast; I would stab him; I would shoot him; I would kill the life out of him. She should see that I was a man; she should love me; she should cling to me.

When the angry brook comes to a pool, its foam falls away upon the still water, but the brook has not ceased to run. So now when I thought of Aristides, of his money, of the betrothal that he had told me should end in marriage, the current of my rage grew calm upon its surface. It was still running, but it ran toward a new desire, and that very quietly. I went to my cousins—my cousins who live in our village—and I whispered to them: "Aristides has money; Aristides has a daughter. My cousins, I shall take his daughter to the mountains; you will help me. When I return, I shall go to the papa for the blessing of holy church; when I return, it is then that you shall have some of Aristides' money."

It was a trifle to ask of relations, but they were not rich, and they asked me how many drachmas I would give them each for the work. I did not make a battle of it. I told them the figures. "It is well," said they. "We shall be ready when you speak."

Soon after I left them I met Aristides. He passed me by without greeting; he looked as if his donkey had eaten his bread. I laughed inside me; for, though Aristides had money, I—I was Pavlos Mpekos. He had an ax upon his shoulder. He was going to fell wood in the forest, for it was the season of the year when timber is gathered in for the winter fires. When the wood was ready, Alexandra would go with a mule to bring it back to their cottage, or so Aristides thought, but I—I knew better. It was then that I and my cousins would carry her off to the mountains. Yet I had not expected that Aristides would have cut his wood so early in the season. It left me but little time, for Alexandra might go to the forest on the morrow, or the day after, at any hour—so soon as the wood was cut. And, so thinking, I returned to my cousins. From that time onward we kept watch over Alexandra, though she knew it not.

It was on Wednesday that I had met Aristides as he was going to fell wood. It was on the Sunday following that Gian and Stavros, my cousins, came running to me at my cottage, saying: "Hasten, hasten! Alexandra has started for the forest, but she is not alone—Aristides and Demetri go with her." "Den peirazei" (no matter), I said. "We will follow, for three guns speak louder than two." And as I answered thus I hastily lifted my gun off its nail and went to the door. From this door I could look adown the hill upon which our village was built, even to the inn. And in front of the inn I could see them quite plainly—Aristides, Demetri and Alexandra. They were mounted upon mules. They were drinking mastic and talking to some women who stood by the inn door. While I waited for them to pass us, that we might secretly follow, the women who were standing by the inn door moved to one side. It was then that there came forth from the inn two soldiers, to whom, while speaking to Aristides, were brought two mules from the hind part of the inn. I judged that the soldiers spoke to Aristides by their gesture, for the distance that lay between us kept back their words from me. And I was right, for in a little while the soldiers rode away in the direction of the forest with Aristides, Demetri and Alexandra. Then we followed them, though they saw us not.

To come to the forest was to follow the great road that leads to Chalcis town, to follow it for some way, and then to turn off to the right through the fields, which lay by the edge of the forest. And this we did—they and we. Now, when I saw the soldiers go to the forest, as well as Aristides, Demetri and Alexandra, I felt fear and I felt rage. "Bah!" I said to my cousins. "Look you there; the men are not going to Chalcis market. They are going to the forest with Alexandra. What does it mean?"

And they, they answered me: "Aristides, he is a cunning one. Perchance he fears an abduction."

I was almost thinking so myself, and to hear their words made me clutch my gun tighter. Still, there was hope with me till I saw those in front of us join two of Aristides' friends, who were felling timber at that part of the forest. Six guns against three! It was too many, said my cousins, but I—I thought bitterly of the betrothal that was to quickly end in a marriage. But even as my heart shrank with despair the sun of my hope was again about to shine upon me. And from where we lay hidden among the trees I saw Aristides and Demetri rapidly load Alexandra's mule with wood and then ride away with the soldiers in the direction of Chalcis. They did not see us, but we saw them a little while, a longer while, and then not at all as they plunged into a thicker growth of the forest to come to the road again by a short cut, and so to Chalcis and its market.

When I saw Alexandra thus left alone with the two friends of Aristides, I was eager to take her to my heart. She seemed closer to me, though I had not moved from where I lay hidden with my cousins. She seemed closer to me, though she stood by her mule, and the mule was where Aristides had tethered it. My eyes watched her greedily, my heart throbbed sternly, and my gun shook in my hand as I waited for her to say "Adio" to the friends of Aristides and go with the mule toward her home. For it was then that I was determining to carry her off to the mountains; then when she would be in the quiet forest.

Yet with all my clever patience it was not to be so, and this I quickly understood when I saw Aristides' friends begin to load their mules.

"The three, they will return together," I whispered to my cousins. "It must not be. Come, brave ones!" I said to them. And with that we crept like snakes nearer and nearer to the men.

I was thinking whether I would shoot them, those friends of Aristides, when I noticed that they had left their guns by the side of the axes with which they had been cutting the wood. Directly I stopped, then turned myself gently round till I faced my cousins, who were crawling behind me.

"Listen!" I said to them, with most gentle level. "Go quickly, but very quietly, to the guns. Then spring to your feet as men. Point your guns at those others, while I, Pavlos Mpekos, go to Alexandra."

It was very simple. They understood me, and I saw them crawl away among the tree boles—crawl away and leave me alone. But it was then that I grew anxious, for the men were loading their mules very fast, and I feared lest they should return to their guns. I was a pallikar, but my hand shook like a woman's in an earthquake. It was not from fear of their blood, yet it was from fear.

I began to count to myself, "En, dua"—I began to count to myself, to measure the slow passing time. "Trianta, pente," I counted, when there sprang up, as if from the very earth, my cousins. A glance at the leveled barrels of their guns, one glance, which showed me the polished brass gleaming angrily toward the friends of Aristides, and I—I, too, sprang to my feet, crying:

"Move not, or we shoot you dead!" And as my words went to them like the blast of a trumpet, I ran with great strides to Alexandra. I seized her in my arms. I clutched her to my breast. I swore to myself that she was mine, while those others, those friends of Aristides, shrank into peace before the gun barrels of my cousins.

"Come, come, mikroutsiko," I said as I took her by her wrist.

Then she spoke, but not to me. It was a gentle voice, but I heard it. She begged of the Holy Virgin some help.

In a little while I had tied her hands behind her back. I had cast the load of wood off the mule to the ground, and I was saying to her: "Up! Get upon the mule's back directly!"

Then she struggled. She prayed me to let her free. She asked help of her father's friends, poor fools! She was wasting time. It was dangerous, and I grew angry. I dragged her to the mule, but she would not mount. She fell to the ground; she screamed for mercy. I grew angry, though I loved her, and I drew my knife. "Now mount," I said. "Now mount, or I will kill you!"

And when she was upon the mule and I held its tether in my hand, I said to my cousins: "Adio, Sas! You will keep those others here till I am safe away." With that I thought no more of them, but, plunging deeper into the forest, was soon upon a track that was known to me, and me alone.

I, Pavlos Mpekos, am strong. It was thus that we traveled very quickly into the depths of the forest, to where it climbs the mountains toward the great rocks. And as we came thither the light grew pale with the approach of night. Already the little birds had gone to bed and the bats were abroad. But to find the path did not trouble me, for I knew it, and the sobs of Alexandra had ceased with the coming of the shadows from the great rocks that we were now among. I was happy—I was a cheerful pallikar. Higher and higher we climbed the mountains. Closer and closer we came to the stars that glittered above our heads. There was peace about us, and it came to my soul.

We were coming to the home of the klephts. I knew it, I who— Den peirazei (no matter)! One must not give a loaf where a crust will do. And they were not there. This I tell you.

It was a cave in the mountain side, this home of the klephts. And as we came to it in the moonlight its mouth yawned wide with blackness. It was very close to the stars, but their light did not come into it. It was far away from Pania, yet Alexandra and I could see the lights of that village twinkling feebly down below. And as she saw them she wept with a strange voice. 'Twas like a lost lamb bleating for its mother. It was foolish, and I bade her enter the cave of which I was master now that the klephts were not there.

To take a light from there where I knew it was, to lay out food from a bag, to light a fire, to pour out wine, was easy for me, a clever man. "And eat, my eyes," I said. "Eat and be merry." But she moped, she pined, she was a delicate bird that was ill. She would have nothing, yet she asked for all—she asked that she might leave me. It was foolish, and I told her so as I ate and drank. It was foolish, though it made me laugh.

But I loved her! My words fell upon her like the waves upon the seashore. They caressed her, they chided her, they smote her. It was useless. She was rock to me that night.

But on the third night my patience had run dry, and she, though she was weak, was yet too strong for me. It was then that my blood grew hot with fury and love; it was then that I said to myself, "If she does not come to me, they will put me in prison." It was then that I felt for my knife and placed its keen point to her white breast; it was then that I, Pavlos Mpekos, won her to me.

She was mine, and so I said to her as we came down the mountain side and through the forest to return to Pania.

"She is mine," I said to my friends as I entered Pania, gun in hand.

"She is mine," I said to Aristides as he looked at my gun, with his hand upon his knife.

"She is mine," I said to the papa, "and we would have the blessing of the holy church."

"She is yours, Pavlos," he answered, "and you shall have it."—Nell Wynn Williams in Chapman's Magazine.

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