

HISTORICAL.

The following succinct history of the Prophet Joseph Smith, jun., and of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints, was written in March, 1855, for publication in the *People's Journal*, in compliance with a request made by the publishers, Tomsly and Cowin, to President Brigham Young; but inasmuch as it did not appear in that paper, it was, by consent of the author, published in the *Deseret News* Sept. 5th, 1855. Of late there has been much inquiry by strangers and sojourners in relation to the history of the Latter Day Saints from the rise of the church till and subsequent to their location in these mountain valleys; and upon suggestion, we have, for the benefit of those thus interested in the matter, thought proper to republish it, correcting a few errors that were inadvertently made in the first instance in setting from the original manuscript.

Joseph Smith, jun., was born in Sharon, Windsor county, Vermont, 23d December, 1805; moved with his father to Ontario county, New York, and in the year 1819 resided in Manchester; he was by occupation a farmer, and his advantages of education were limited.

At the age of 15 he began to reflect seriously on the necessity of being prepared for a future state of existence. He went among the different denominations that existed in that state, and his mind became perplexed with the *clashing and contention* which existed among those who professed the name of Christ.

Disgusted with the confusion which his researches disclosed, and encouraged by the promise of Saint James: "If any of you lack wisdom, let him ask of God who giveth unto all men liberally and upbraideth not, and it shall be given him," he retired to a grove, and in earnest prayer besought the Lord to reveal the way of salvation, and while thus engaged he beheld two glorious Beings wrapped in a brilliant and glorious light, who informed him that all the religious sects of the present age had departed from the ancient gospel of Jesus Christ and his apostles, with its gifts and priesthood, which should be made known to him in due season: many glorious things were shown him in this vision.

On the 21st September, 1823, while engaged in prayer, and striving to exercise faith, the room was filled with light surpassing that of noonday, in the midst of which was a person whose countenance was as lightning, and yet so full of innocence and goodness, and of such a glorious appearance as to banish all apprehension; he was an angel commissioned of God to inform him that the covenants with ancient Israel touching their posterity should soon be fulfilled, and that the great work to prepare for the second coming of Christ should now commence; the fulness of the gospel be made known to all nations; that the native inhabitants of America were a remnant of Israel, who had anciently enjoyed the ministry of inspired men; that records containing their history had been preserved to the period of their national degeneracy, and that these records had been concealed in the earth, and the Lord promised they should soon be revealed.

On the following day the angel returned and showed him the spot where the sacred record was deposited. A small rock, projecting a little above the earth's surface, covered a stone box; he opened it and beheld the plates.

The angel said, you cannot at this time obtain them, and when they are obtained, it must be by prayer and faithfulness in obeying the Lord; they are not deposited here for the sake of accumulating gain or wealth, or for the glory of this world; they are of no worth to the children of men, only for the knowledge they contain, which is the fulness of the gospel of Jesus Christ, as it was given to the ancient people of this land. The stature of this personage was a little above the common size of men in this age; his garments were perfectly white, and they appeared to be without seams.

Much instruction was given by the angel to Mr. Smith during a period of four years, and on the 22d September, 1827, the angel of the Lord delivered the records into his hands; they were engraved on plates which had the appearance of gold, each plate was not far from 7 inches by 8 in width and length not quite as thick as common tin, beautifully engraved on both sides in reformed Egyptian characters, bound together in a volume as the leaves of a book, fastened at the edge with three rings running through the book; with the records was found a curious instrument, called by the ancients the Urim and Thummim. By the gift and power of God, through its means, he translated the record, which is the Book of Mormon. The first edition of 5,000 copies was published by Joseph Smith, at Palmyra, New York.

The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints was organized, at the house of Peter Whitmer, sen., Fayette, Seneca county, New York, on the 6th April, 1830, and was then composed of six members, who were baptized by immersion under the hands of Joseph Smith and Oliver Cowdery, who received the apostleship by commandment from God, and the administration of heavenly messengers, and were the first elders of the church.

The Book of Mormon being printed, the church began to attract the attention of newspaper editors, who immediately opened their artillery against Joseph Smith, and the band-

ful who had received his testimony. The tocsin of persecution was immediately sounded, and continued to increase with scarcely any cessation, during his whole life.

Through the labors of Joseph Smith, Hyrum Smith, Oliver Cowdery, and other elders who had been ordained, branches were established in New York, Pennsylvania, Ohio, the British Provinces and New England States.

A large branch of the church was established in Kirtland, Geauga county, Ohio; and the spirit of persecution pursuing all the branches to a very great extent, the Saints commenced gathering to Kirtland; and soon after, Joseph Smith, with several of the elders, visited Jackson county, Missouri, and commenced settlements of the Saints: Upper Missouri being at that time but thinly inhabited.

In June, 1831, a conference was held at Kirtland; a number of the elders were ordained High Priests by Joseph Smith, he being president of the high priesthood and of the whole church, being called of the Lord like unto Moses, a Seer, Revelator, Translator, and Prophet; and it was his privilege to have two counselors, to act as assistant presidents, which form the First Presidency of the church.

In June, 1832, W. W. Phelps & Co. commenced printing a monthly periodical in Independence, Missouri, devoted expressly to the spreading of the principles of the gospel, and publishing the revelations of God to the church.

A mercantile house was established by the firm of A. S. Gilbert & Co., and several hundreds of farms were opened, and mills and many extensive improvements commenced.

The elders continued to preach with unabated zeal, notwithstanding they were constantly subjected to abuse.

On March 25, 1832, Joseph Smith and Elder Sidney Rigdon were dragged from their beds at midnight, in the town of Hiram, Portage county, Ohio, daubed with tar and feathers, and severely injured. Aqua fortis was poured into President Smith's mouth, and he was held by the throat until left for dead. One of his children was sick with the measles, and being in bed with him at the time of the outrage, was thereby exposed to the night air, and died almost immediately: she may, therefore, be called the first martyr of this dispensation.

In June, 1833, a commencement was made for the building of a Temple in Kirtland.

On the 22d July, 1833, the printing office of W. W. Phelps, at Independence, Missouri, was surrounded by a mob of about five hundred men; the press was destroyed, the type piled, and the house, a two story brick building, pulled down. Loss of property, \$6,700. This mob violence continued from day to day.

Edward Partridge, the presiding Bishop of the church, was publicly stripped, and tarred and feathered on the public square, in the presence of several hundred spectators.

Mr. Charles Allen, a member of the church, received the same compliment; the tar was mixed with some corrosive substance.

The store of Gilbert & Whitney was broken open, their goods promiscuously scattered in the streets—lives threatened, individuals whipped, and a great number of houses unroofed by parties visiting the different settlements; upwards of 200 houses were destroyed by fire, and 1,500 persons driven from their homes and scattered into the adjoining counties, principally into Clay, without any means of subsistence, a great number having perished from wounds, bruises and exposure.

As the Saints were scattered along the banks of the Missouri river, a plot was laid by a party of the mob to murder all who should be left on the Jackson side.

On the morning of the 13th of October, very early, they beheld the wonderful meteoric phenomenon of the stars falling from heaven, which caused the hearts of the Saints to rejoice, and the mob to abandon their purpose; some of the mob were so affected by the sight that they wept, believing the day of judgment at hand. I am sorry to say that clergymen of various denominations sanctified these deeds of cruelty by their presence and participation.

In the fall of 1833, a printing press was established in Kirtland, Ohio, where Oliver Cowdery commenced the republication of the *Evening and Morning Star*.

In 1834, Joseph Smith, accompanied by 205 men, visited Clay county, Missouri, and attempted to bring about a reconciliation with the people of Jackson. His Excellency Daniel Dunkin, then Governor of Missouri, notified the Legislature in his annual message, that the means of enforcing the laws, both civil and military, were so insufficient that the Mormons could not be protected in the state. He had previously written to Col. J. Thornton, under date of the 6th June, 1834, as follows: "I am fully persuaded that the eccentricity of the religious opinions and practices of the Mormons, is at the bottom of the outrages committed against them."

By industry, economy, and prudence, the Saints in Clay and the adjoining counties had begun to acquire wealth and to enjoy prosperity, and were enabled to purchase considerable tracts of land; this aided the Jackson county mob to raise an excitement in Clay county. Public meetings were held, and the Saints notified by their official resolutions, that they must cease to make improvements in Clay county, or to purchase other lands; and required to leave the county of Clay. A location was accordingly made in a new, uninhabited, naked prairie county, destitute of timber, by the unanimous consent of the mob, who said it was fit for nothing else but the Mormons. The

Saints of Clay county purchased the lands of the government, and moved immediately into Caldwell.

In 1834, Joseph Smith, senior, was set apart as Patriarch over the whole Church to bless the fatherless.

On the 14th February, 1835, Joseph Smith, by a commandment of God, selected and ordained Twelve Apostles, to be special witnesses in all the world of the fulness of the gospel, and to preside over the church in all cases when the Presidency were absent; and during the year 1835, they visited all the States east of Ohio, and also the British Provinces, comforting the scattered branches, preaching the gospel, and building up new branches. Many hundreds were baptised during the sea-son. About the same time, he also ordained a quorum of seventy elders for the same purpose, many of whom devoted the most of their time to traveling and preaching, going forth "with out purse or scrip."

The Temple in Kirt and was so far completed as to be dedicated on the 27th March, 1836, 416 elders being present in a general council on the evening of the dedication. This temple is a stone building 80 feet by 59, the walls 50 feet high, and the tower 110 feet high. There are two main halls 55 feet by 65 in the inner court, four vestries in the front, and five school rooms in the attic. The building is well finished, and a fine specimen of architecture.

In June, 1837, Heber C. Kimball, Orson Hyde, Willard Richards, and Joseph Fielding, with three others, started from Kirtland on a mission to the British Islands. They arrived in England on the 20th of July, without a farthing in their pockets, and on the 23d commenced preaching in Preston. At Christmas the church had extended from Preston to Penwortham, Longton, Southport, Eccleston, Whittle, and Hunter's Hill, the number of members amounting to about one thousand.

In 1837 the greater portion of the Saints in Kirtland, moved to Missouri, and settled in Caldwell, Daviess, Clinton, Carroll, and Ray counties. The county of Caldwell had been organized, and the city of Far West established.

In December, the printing office in Kirtland was destroyed by fire, the work of an incendiary.

In the spring of 1838, the emigration to Missouri continued, most of the Saints leaving Kirtland. The foundation of a town was laid on Grand river in Daviess county, called Adam-on-di-ahman. Several hundred thousand acres of land had been entered at the land office, and some two thousand large and flourishing farms opened thereon. A village was also commenced in Carroll county, on the Missouri river, called De Witt.

Caldwell county, in three years, from a naked prairie, had become one of the most flourishing counties in the State. A foundation was laid for a Temple at Far West, 110 feet long by 80 wide, a printing office established, and a monthly paper called the *Elder's Journal* published. In August 1838, at an election held in Galatin, Daviess county, a barrel of whiskey was rolled out, and the crowd invited to drink heartily, and prevent the Mormons from voting. A riot ensued, which ended in knocking down three Mormons—(eight only being present)—and in 23 of the mob being carried off in a degree of helplessness. One of the Mormons was stabbed. Immediately the tocsin of Mobocracy was again sounded, and several hundred men assembled at Millport, swearing extermination against the Saints. They were soon dispersed by the interference of Gen. Doniphan, but it was only to shift their quarters. They removed to De Witt in Carroll county, and drove out its inhabitants, rbbing them of their property. Many of the Saints perished from want and suffering, and the remnant escaped to Caldwell.

The mob gain renewed their operations in the county of Daviess; filling the country with false reports; but finding their undertaking likely to fail, Liburn W. Boggs then the Executive of Missouri, issued an order for the extermination of the Mormons from the State of Missouri; and ordered Major General Clark, with 13,000 men to proceed immediately to Far West and put the cruel decree into execution. This force immediately proceeded to the settlements of the Mormons; who being but few in number comparatively, and finding themselves opposed by the executive order of the State, and consequently by the form of legal proceeding, made no resistance to this military force, altho' they would have fought the whole of them had they continued in their true colors as a mob—Under pledges of peace and protection, men, women and children were indiscriminately massacred, women ravished, houses plundered, horses stolen, cattle and hogs shot in their pens for sport, corn fields robbed, thousands of acres of grain destroyed by turning horses into the fields, and fences burnt up. Several hundred persons were driven in a defenceless condition into a hollow square of armed fiends, and compelled to sign away their property to the Republic of Missouri, to defray the expenses which had been incurred in committing these crimes.—About seventy of the brethren were selected for the purpose of execution: public notice was given that they would be put to death, and the residue permitted to go home, take their families and leave the State immediately on pain of death.

On the 1st of November, 1838, Joseph Smith and his comrades were tried by Court Martial, without their being present, or allowed to make any defence, and sentenced to be shot. The order for their execution was given by Major General Lucas, as follows:—

BRIGADIER GENERAL DONIPHAN:—Sir, you will

take Joseph Smith and the other Prisoners into the Public Square of Far West, and SHOOT them at 9 o'clock to-morrow morning.

SAMUEL D. LUCAS,

Major-General Commanding.

Doniphan possessing a knowledge of Law, and having a good share of humanity, replied—"It is cool blooded murder! I will not obey your order; my Brigade shall march for Liberty to-morrow morning at 8 o'clock. And if you execute those men, I'll hold you responsible before an earthly tribunal, so help me God!"

Thus the lives of the Prisoners were saved.—The scene that followed beggars description: language is inadequate to describe it. Imagine fifteen thousand people, embracing all ages, sexes, and conditions, driven in mid-winter from everything they possessed; destitute, hungry, naked, homeless, and friendless, across trackless prairies, scattered two and three hundred miles from their homes, which they had erected on lands purchased from the Government of the United States, and under the protection of the American flag, driven across the Mississippi river, hundreds—perhaps thousands—perished during the winter, spring and summer because of this exposure. The men in consequence of their over exertion and anxiety, failed first, leaving widows and orphan children still to suffer.

Notwithstanding the violent feelings of the people of Missouri against the Mormons, they suffered Joseph Smith and other Elders who had been in prison for six months (and a part of the time fed upon human flesh) to leave the State as soon as the Mormons had all left.

President Smith immediately went to Washington, and made application to the President of the United States, and to Congress for redress; and the most favorable reply was that of Mr. Van Buren, then President of the United States: "Your cause is just, but I can do nothing for you." Senator Clay coldly remarked: "You had better go to Oregon." Senator Calhoun said: "It involves a nice question, the question of States rights; it will not do to agitate it;" and the Senate committee of Congress reported it was none of their business.

The scattered remnant, not disheartened though persecuted, clustered round President Smith, and commenced building the city of Nauvoo, in Hancock county, Illinois; a point so sickly that two unsuccessful attempts had been made to settle it, only a few families living there; yet their burying yard contained such a number of graves as might frighten a new settler from the State of New York, even if there had been three thousand inhabitants.

On 14th Sept., 1840, the Patriarch Joseph Smith, sen., worn out by exposure and toil, died at Nauvoo, and Hyrum Smith, his eldest son, who had previously received ordination as a blessing under his father's hands, was acknowledged Patriarch over the whole church.

The buffs around were put in cultivation, the swamps drained, and in a few years it became as healthy in Nauvoo as any part of Illinois.

Missouri, however, not content with her wholesale system of robbery and extermination against the Saints, commenced a series of vexatious lawsuits against them as soon as they became satisfied that they would not all die on the Mississippi.

In 1841, Joseph Smith was demanded from the Governor of Illinois, and a writ issued by him for his apprehension; a writ of habeas corpus was issued, the case was investigated at Monmouth before Judge Stephen A. Douglas, and the arrest declared illegal.

This proceeding, including the expense of counsel, fees of attendants, as witnesses, etc., cost upwards of three thousand dollars; no inconsiderable sum for a person who had just been robbed of his all.

Dissatisfied with the result of legal proceedings Missouri commenced a system of kidnapping by which means a number of individuals were carried forcibly without form of law into that State, whipped, imprisoned, some of them hung by the neck and otherwise tortured.

The sum of \$200,000 was appropriated by the Legislature of Missouri to defray the expenses of the Mormon massacres, the plundered property not being considered a sufficient remuneration.

In 1842, a new demand was made by the Gov. of Missouri Joseph Smith was again arrested and an attempt made to kidnap him into that State. A writ of habeas corpus was obtained from the U. S. District Court for the State of Illinois Judge Pope heard the case in Springfield, and decided the proceedings illegal, and Missouri had no claim on him, and ordered it entered on the docket that he should be troubled no more in the matter, this proceeding altogether cost \$12,000.

A foundation had been laid for a Temple in the city of Nauvoo. A charter had been obtained for the city conferring liberal powers upon the City Council. A University, and Manufacturing Association incorporated. A Legion also chartered. The Unive city was organized and put in operation in several departments. The Manufacturers Association commenced the erection of large buildings for the manufacture of pottery. Thousands of people flocked in from every part of the United States and the British Isles. Streets were opened, hundreds of fine buildings erected, and a company was incorporated for the purpose of building an extensive hotel, with a capital of \$200,000. A considerable amount of stock was sold and the basement story of the building with 240 feet of front was finished. An extensive printing establishment, stereotype foundry, and book bindery, put in operation, two Masonic Lodges established, a large and commodious Masonic Temple was built. Several flourishing villages of the Saints were