

DESERET NEWS.

WEEKLY.

TRUTH AND LIBERTY.

WEDNESDAY, - APRIL 16, 1879.

THE CONFERENCE.

The Conference which closed yesterday afternoon, was an occasion of much profit and blessing to the Latter-day Saints who attended. There is a general feeling of satisfaction with its spirit and proceedings. All with whom we have conversed have expressed themselves highly delighted with the meetings, the business and the instructions.

Considerable time was necessarily consumed in the reading of the various reports, and the details, financial and statistical, being numerous and dry, some might consider them tedious and uninteresting. But the presentation of these reports, apart from the information they contain, which is of great value and is duly appreciated by those who closely watch the progress of our affairs, tends to establish a feeling of confidence and security, and confirm the faith of the people in a glorious future for the Church of which they form a part. The figures show an increase of numbers, a growth of population, a financial condition and an encouraging prospect which must be truly gratifying to all. The Saints can perceive that the affairs of the Church are conducted with economy and integrity, and being made acquainted with its minutiae, and called upon to manifest their approval or disapproval of the management of the business, the commandment is carried out which requires that "all things in the Church shall be done by common consent."

Everything presented to the Conference met with the hearty and united approval of the people. The expenditures of money; the arrangement for a President's home; the appointment of missionaries; the filling of the vacancy in the Council of the Twelve; and all other business matters were endorsed with a heartiness and unanimity of feeling that was pleasant to contemplate.

The spirit that prevailed was eminently calm, peaceful and prophetic of progress and the Divine favor. Those who imagined that "Mormonism" was declining, in any sense of the word, had only to look upon the vast assembly, filling up even at its first meeting that immense tabernacle, to note the earnestness and satisfaction of the Saints, and listen to the firm, confident and unflinching tones of the speakers, to see that any such idea was but a vain imagination. Those who cannot see in this work the evidences of vigor, vitality, growth, progress and the elements of power yet to be developed must be smitten with deplorable mental blindness.

Considering the tremendous efforts which have been made against us; the unparalleled flood of "Christian" petitions poured into Congress asking in substance for our destruction; the influences which have been brought to bear to call down the whole power of the Government as well as the wrath of the great body of the nation upon us; and then viewing the manner in which these thousand and one shafts have been turned aside without making even a scratch or a puncture, our cause for gratitude towards Him who has promised to fight our battles for us could but be deep and universal, and establish at this Conference an increase of faith and reliance upon the Lord, our sure and only defence.

The future, seen by the light of hope and heavenly promise, and warranted by the present sound and solid state of our Church affairs, is bright with cheering prospects. Our temples are rising rapidly; our meetings are well attended; our tithing payments are swelling; our Sunday schools are thronged with the children of the Saints; our young men and women are becoming devoted to the study of the principles of the gospel; our schools and seminaries are greatly improving; the sisters are increasing in their usefulness in the great cause; our home industries are

multiplying; our co-operative institutions are established on a firm basis; our settlements are reaching out to the north and to the south, to the east and to the west; prosperity crowns the labors of the husbandman; our missionaries abroad feel the power of God in their labors, and reap souls as well as scatter the seeds of the word; confidence is increasing in the hearts of our people; the Spirit is poured out from on high; the signs of the coming of the Son of Man are appearing; the sayings of the prophets are being fulfilled; the work of redemption for the dead goes forward; the world is ripening for the angels to "thrust in their sickles;" God is working among all nations to prepare the way for the grand consummation; and if we, as the children of the covenant, will but magnify our calling and live as taught during the Conference just concluded, we will become the happiest, wisest, wealthiest and most powerful community upon the face of the globe, will escape the judgments that are coming on the earth in the "great tribulation" which is very near at hand, will triumph over our foes, will be prepared for the appearing of the Redeemer, and, with the ransomed of the Lord, will stand in holy places and not be moved when God shall shake terribly the earth, and smite the kingdoms of wickedness with the sword of destruction.

We congratulate our brethren and sisters on the happy and peaceful gathering in which they have participated, and hope that they will carry its influence to their various homes, spread it abroad among their neighbors who were absent, and retain it in their hearts as long as they live in this mortal probation.

"SOLVING THE PROBLEM," AGAIN.

UTAH continues to be a subject of anxiety to many would-be statesmen, particularly in the western portion of this republic. The editor of the Chicago Tribune, who recently passed through this Territory on his way to the Pacific Coast, settled the difficulty of the "Mormon" problem at once, as he thought, by announcing that Utah should be annexed to Nevada. This may be considered a wonderful stroke of wisdom, but there will be a variety of opinions upon the subject. The idea is not original. It has been broached several times before. But it was never viewed in a favorable light by either of the parties principally concerned. Utah did not want to be annexed, Nevada did not desire the annexation. We do not think time has changed the wishes of one or the other. Utah ought not to be pushed into and swallowed up by a neighboring State without any voice in the matter. Nevada could not be compelled to receive the unwelcome addition. It is not likely therefore that Mr. Medill's solution will solve anything.

The question may be asked why should Nevada refuse the addition to its territory of a region rich in agricultural and mineral resources, and to its population of a people thrifty, industrious and temperate in their habits? We answer because its leading men perceive in such an amalgamation the overturning of its political affairs, and the ultimate control thereof by the new element introduced. The "Mormons" would be a unit, and that unit would prove the principal factor in the sum of its politics. It would be Nevada that would find itself annexed instead of Utah. The Nevada people understand this, and therefore are not hungry for annexation.

Another old project revived among the busybodies who want to put a finger in the Utah pie, is its partition by a Congressional knife, with a slice each for the surrounding Territories. But this would only be an enlargement of the troubles which they imagine are to arise if Utah is left alone. The "Mormons" are as sure to increase and become a great people as a thrifty tree under proper conditions is to bear an abundance of fruit. The spirit which holds them together and inspires them to action is not affected by distance, by the lines and boundaries of states

and nations, nor by any of the physical obstacles or arbitrary rules that men may set up. Divisions effected in the manner proposed, would be in their effect upon the body of this people like making marks of separation upon the mass of the great sea. They would still be united, as they are now wherever they may be upon the face of the wide earth, into one homogenous whole with similar aims, objects and interests before them. As a religious body they would not be divided in the least. As several political bodies instead of one, each part growing, increasing, flourishing and spreading abroad, they would eventually control, by their union, numbers and force, all opposing elements in every commonwealth to which they had become attached.

The consequence would be the establishment of many States instead of one under "Mormon" influence. If the admission of one State in which the "Mormon" people hold the balance of power is an evil to be dreaded, (which we by no means admit, however) how much greater would be the evils of several States in the same condition? The partition policy would not accomplish the end desired by our enemies, but on the contrary, would result in its very opposite. Will some one be kind enough to suggest a new "solution" of this knotty "Mormon" problem, all the old ones have proven insufficient, and radical anti-"Mormons" are in a terrible strait for something on which to pin their hopes which have been badly shattered by past experience.

THE DEAD REVIVED AGAIN.

A FEW days ago we took occasion to notice in a general way an article in *Sunday Afternoon* for April, written by T. L. Rogers, and entitled "The Mormons." There is one point in it on which we offer some special remarks, not because it contains anything new or remarkable, but because it is being put forth in other quarters and is attracting some attention. It is the revival of the old and thoroughly exploded fiction called "The Spaulding Story." Our apology to our readers for alluding at any length to this dead and almost forgotten issue, is the attempt now being made to resurrect and fan it into life, as a desperate resource of a few priests and editors to account for the origin of the Book of Mormon. Rogers says:

"The evidence is complete that Smith discovered only what he and some associates had hidden in a box of their own making in a hole of their own digging. Smith came into possession of a copy of the work of Spaulding made by Sidney Rigdon, a workman in Patterson's printing office. Rigdon confessed the fact afterwards when he was cut off from the Mormon Church by Brigham Young. The three witnesses also quarreled with Joseph and Rigdon, and confessed to having sworn falsely. Rigdon on leaving the work of printer, became a preacher of peculiar doctrines. Smith had quite a large following in certain villages peculiarly his, and these two religious Ishmaelites coming together set to work to give the world a new Bible."

The above embodies the theory put forth many years ago, but which was fully refuted at the time of its invention. Rogers says "the evidence is complete." The fact is not a particle of this "evidence" is offered, neither can it be produced. Who is the "associate" referred to? When and where was the box made and the hole dug? Sidney Rigdon was never a printer in Patterson's printing office; he never "confessed the fact" asserted, either verbally or in writing, neither did the three witnesses, or either of them, ever confess to "having sworn falsely." Not a particle of evidence to substantiate any of Rogers' statements can be adduced. On the contrary, an abundance of positive proof has been published repeatedly establishing the falsity of such charges.

All the absurd accusations and stupid remarks which have emanated from the pulpit and the press in regard to this Spaulding matter, are based upon a letter to the Boston *Record-*

er, written by one John Storrs, a Congregational preacher of Holliston, Massachusetts. It was published in that paper April 19, 1839, and contained an alleged statement of Matilda Davison, widow of Solomon Spaulding. It gives what purports to be a brief history of Spaulding's life, from which it appears that he was a retired preacher, who, while living in New Salem, Ohio, amused himself in his latter days by writing a romance, which he called the "Manuscript Found," in which was a pretended history of the early inhabitants of this country, which he read from time to time for the delectation of his friends, about the year 1812. He then removed to Pittsburg, Pennsylvania, where he handed the manuscript to a Mr. Patterson, who edited a paper, and who would have published it if Mr. Spaulding had furnished the title page and preface, which he refused to do for some cause not mentioned. The manuscript was returned to the author, who removed to Amity, Pa., where he died in 1816, and the manuscript was preserved by his widow. In the year 1834, extracts from the Book of Mormon having been read by a "woman preacher" at New Salem, the similarity between it and the Spaulding manuscript was perceived by persons present, and one, Dr. Philaster Hurlburt was deputed to obtain the original manuscript, for the purpose of comparing it with the "Mormon Bible," and by exposing the imposture, preventing the spread of the delusion. This letter of Mr. Storrs, with the alleged statement of Mrs. Davison, has been reproduced in the Pittsburg *Telegraph*, and appears in its issue of March 27, 1879. It forms the entire foundation for the books, articles and sermons that have been put forth to account for the Book of Mormon. Let us examine it a little.

We will admit, for argument's sake, that there was such a person as Solomon Spaulding, and that the pious old gentleman spent his last years on earth in composing this work of fiction, also that he made some attempt to get it printed, that the manuscript fell to his widow, and that she surrendered it to Dr. Philaster Hurlburt. The question now is, what became of this valuable document? If it formed the material from which the Book of Mormon was fabricated, why was it not published, or portions of it given side by side with extracts from the Book said to be made up from it? What did Mrs. Davison pretend to know about the resemblance between the Book of Mormon and the "Manuscript Found?" She knew nothing but what Hurlburt told her. What did she know about Sidney Rigdon's residence in Pittsburg, or connection with Patterson's printing office? Nothing whatever. Who wrote the letter signed by Mrs. Davison and working up this theory? It was plainly the work of John Storrs, the pious preacher who was anxious to stop the spread of "Mormonism," which put his craft in danger. Who was the prime originator of the Spaulding story? This same "Dr." Philaster Hurlburt, whose history is too vile to present here in full, but we will give a small chapter from it because it is connected with the subject.

Hurlburt was a "seventh son," and hence received his title of "Dr.," a common appellation for such septenaries. He was a member of the Methodist Church, but was expelled for immorality, and afterwards imposed himself upon the "Mormon" Church from which he was excommunicated in the year 1833 for a similar cause. He swore that he would murder Joseph Smith, and for this was bound over to keep the peace in the sum of \$500. It was after this that he, in company with E. D. How, of Painesville, Ohio, undertook to overthrow this Church by publishing a book called "Mormonism Unveiled." In this work the Spaulding story first appeared, and it was claimed that the "Manuscript Found" was

"A romance purporting to have been translated from the Latin, found on twenty-four rolls of parchment in a cave, but written in modern style, giving a fabulous account of a ship being driven upon the American coast proceeding from Rome to Britain, a short time previous to the Christian era; this country being inhabited by the Indians."

After the publication of that work an interview was held with Mrs. Davison and her daughter, Mrs. McKinsty, a report of which

was published in the Quincy, (Ills.) *Whig*, from which we extract the following:

Q—Have you read the Book of Mormon?

A—I have a little of it.

Q—Is there any similarity between Mr. Spaulding's manuscript and the Book of Mormon?

A—Not any.

Q—Did the manuscript describe an idolatrous or a religious people?

A—An idolatrous.

Q—Where is the manuscript?

A—Mr. Hurlburt came here and took it away, promising to publish it, and said I should have half the proceeds.

Q—Did Hurlburt publish the manuscript?

A—No, he informed me by letter that the manuscript after having been examined did not read as they expected, and that they would not publish it.

Q—What is the size of the manuscript?

A—About the third part of the Book of Mormon.

Mrs. McKinsty corroborated Mrs. Davison in every particular.

Sidney Rigdon wrote to the Boston *Recorder*, under date of May 27th, 1839, in reply to the Storrs letter, in which he stated that he had never worked in a printing office in Pittsburg; never knew Mr. Patterson; that there was no such person in that town while he was there; but he had learned that a man by that name had previously owned a printing office in that place, but had failed; that he never heard of Spaulding or his romance until he saw Hurlburt and How's book. He also related some of Hurlburt's history and character.

Parley P. Pratt in his autobiography gives an account of his own conversion to "Mormonism," and his first visit to Joseph Smith, the prophet, who was in Ontario County, New York, and his journey in October, 1830, with others to Ohio as a missionary, where he met with Sidney Rigdon with whom he had formerly been acquainted. We extract the following paragraph:

"We called on Mr. S. Rigdon and then for the first time his eyes beheld the Book of Mormon; I myself had the happiness to present it to him in person. He was much surprised, and it was with much persuasion and argument that he was prevailed on to read it; and after he had read it, he had a great struggle of mind before he fully believed and embraced it; and when finally convinced of its truth, he called together a large congregation of his friends, neighbors and brethren, and then addressed them very affectionately for nearly two hours."

* * * The next morning himself and wife were baptized by Elder Cowdery. * * * Early in 1831, Mr. Rigdon, having been ordained under our hands, visited Elder J. Smith, Jr., in the State of New York, for the first time."

Now, what foundation is there for this stupid Spaulding story? An elderly retired preacher is said to have written a romance about an idolatrous people from Rome, whose records, written in Latin, on twenty-four rolls of parchment, were hid in a cave. This manuscript was handed to Mr. Patterson in Pittsburg, in 1812, for publication, but he did not print it. Sidney Rigdon, who did not live in Pittsburg until after Patterson had left, saw the work and copied it, although it had been returned to the widow, and Joseph Smith, many hundreds of miles away, in the year 1827, made up a book from it about a religious people who left Jerusalem, and whose records were inscribed in modified Egyptian characters on plates of gold, the translation of which contained the fulness of the gospel of Jesus Christ, being assisted in the work by Sidney Rigdon, whom he never saw until more than a year after the book was published! Another account of the same affair says the Spaulding story was a history of the ten tribes. The Book of Mormon is not a history of the ten tribes, and makes but one brief allusion to them as being in a distant country.

Any one who has read the Book of Mormon can easily see that it is impossible to eliminate the religious from the historical part of the work, each being identified with, growing out of and essential to the other, forming one harmonious and consistent whole. The witnesses to the book are unimpeachable. Eight testify that they saw and