

Qx22 – Ludicrous Ideas & Policies Promoted by The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints (LDS) – 2

Dear: Continuing with the breath-taking pace of this review (whereby, in more than 20 pages, I've managed to cover the first two pages of the Book of Mormon!), I'll now move on from its *Title Page* and *Preface* to its *Introduction*, whose author isn't identified. Incidentally, this *Introduction* appears in the 1981 hard-copy version of the Book of Mormon (BoM) but neither in the electronic version at the University of Michigan (referenced in the previous chapter) nor in the 1830 edition (also already referenced).

IDEAS IN THE BOOK OF MORMON'S INTRODUCTION

The first paragraph of the *Introduction* is:

The Book of Mormon is a volume of holy scripture comparable to the Bible. It is a record of God's dealings with the ancient inhabitants of the Americas and contains, as does the Bible, the fulness of the everlasting gospel.

“The fulness of the everlasting gospel”?!

What silliness! First, Dear: is it logical? If the Bible contains the “fulness of the everlasting gospel”, then what more can be said? How can something else (the BoM) add to something that's full? In my dictionary, ‘fulness’ (a variant spelling of ‘fullness’) is defined to be “the state of being filled to capacity” or “the state of being complete or whole”! If the Bible is ‘complete’, then what (pray tell) is the point of publishing the BoM?!

Actually, if we can trust the reporter, the probable author of the BoM (Sidney Rigdon) responded to that question. His response is contained in the following quotation¹ from the 7 May 1831 issue (Vol. 1, No. 10) of a periodical called *The Evangelical Inquirer*, published in Dayton, Ohio; it's signed simply with the initials “MSC”, which seems to identify the reporter as Matthew S. Clapp, a minister in the Disciples Church.

We then asked Mr. R. [Rigdon] what object we could have in receiving the Book of Mormon – whether it enjoined a single virtue that the Bible did not, or whether it mentioned and prohibited a single additional vice, or whether it exhibited a new attribute of Deity? He said it did not. “The Book of Mormon,” said he, “is just calculated to form and govern the millennial church; the old revelation was never

¹ The original is at <http://www.solomonspalding.com/docs/1831i05a.htm>.

calculated for that, nor could it accomplish that object; and without receiving the Book of Mormon, there is no salvation for anyone into whose hands it shall come.”

So then, according to the likely author of the BoM (Rigdon), the Bible isn't “complete”, it doesn't contain “the fulness of the everlasting gospel.” Consequently, whoever wrote in the *Introduction* to the BoM that “It... contains, as does the Bible, the fulness of the everlasting gospel” contradicts the likely author of the BoM! Furthermore, since the likely author of the BoM claims that its purpose is to prepare people for Christ's imminent return, then whereas that didn't happen, therefore... Duh. Sorry Dear, sometimes such silliness gets to me – and there's more.

“The fullness of the everlasting gospel”?!

Thus, even in just the first paragraph of the *Introduction* to the BoM: what's with the adjective “everlasting”? What evidence is provided to support a contention that anything is (or ever could be) “everlasting” – including the universe!? Indeed, what evidence for such a claim could ever be provided? It's logically impossible ever to show that anything is “everlasting”!

I'll put it to you this way, Dear: I'll give you a million dollars if you can demonstrate that anything – but anything – is “eternal” or “everlasting”, including time itself! And don't forget, Dear (as someone else suggested): “All the ‘eternal’ gods were immortal!”

Let me give you some examples of such LDS ludicrousness by showing you some official LDS “doctrines” that, when introduced, were all claimed to be “eternal”. This quotation is from an article entitled *To Those Who Are Investigating “Mormonism”*, written by Richard Packham:²

Many doctrines which were once taught by the LDS church, and held to be fundamental, essential and ‘eternal’, have been abandoned. Whether we feel that the church was correct in abandoning them is not the point; rather, the point is that a church claiming to be the church of God takes one ‘everlasting’ position at one time and the opposite position at another, all the time claiming to be proclaiming the word of God. Some examples are:

- The Adam-God doctrine (Adam is God the Father),
- The United Order (all property of church members is to be held in common, with title in the church),

² Available at <http://home.teleport.com/~packham/tract.htm>.

- Plural Marriage (polygamy: a man must have more than one wife to attain the highest degree of heaven),
- The Curse of Cain (the black race is not entitled to hold God’s priesthood, because it is cursed; this doctrine was not abandoned until 1978),
- Blood Atonement (some sins – apostasy, adultery, murder, interracial marriage – must be atoned for by the shedding of the sinner’s blood, preferably by someone appointed to do so by church authorities).

All of these doctrines were proclaimed by the reigning prophet to be the Word of God, ‘eternal’, ‘everlasting’, to govern the church ‘forevermore’. All have been abandoned by the present church.

Likely Sources of the Phrase “the everlasting gospel”

But returning to the phrases “eternal gospel” and “everlasting gospel”, they’re so rampant in Mormonism that it might be worth mentioning their likely sources – and imagined significance. As was pointed out in Chapter IX of the 1902 book by W.A. Linn entitled *The Story of the Mormons* (referenced in the previous chapter), the original suggestion of an “everlasting gospel” can be found in the New Testament’s *Revelation 14, 6* (here from the KJV, with underlining added):

And I saw another angel fly in the midst of heaven, having the everlasting gospel to preach unto them that dwell on the earth, and to every nation, and kindred, and tongue, and people, saying with a loud voice, “Fear God, and give glory to him; for the hour of his judgment is come: and worship him that made heaven, and earth, and the sea, and the fountains of waters.”

But meanwhile, Dear, as I suggested in an earlier chapter (A) and will try to show you in later chapters (including Z), there are hints that “him that made heaven, and earth, and the sea, and the fountains of water” was probably some symmetry-breaking quantum-like fluctuation in a total void. And when I talked to this fluctuation the other day, she said that the last thing she ever wanted was anyone to worship her! Instead she said, rather jocularly: “I’ll bet you can’t figure out how I did it!” I responded: “You’re on!”

Sorry again, Dear, but sometimes such nonsense really gets to me. Anyway, in his Chapter IX, Linn continues as follows [to which I’ve added a few notes in brackets and the coloring of some text]:

Having presented the evidence which shows [or better, “supports the contention”] that the historical part of the Mormon Bible was supplied by the Spaulding manuscript, we may now pay attention to other evidence, which indicates that the entire conception of a revelation of golden plates by an angel was not even original, and also that its suggestor was [or probably better, “almost certainly was”] Rigdon...

That the idea of the revelation as described by Smith in his autobiography was not original is shown by the fact that a similar divine message, engraved on plates, was announced to have been received from an angel nearly six hundred years before the alleged visit of an angel to Smith. These original plates were described as of copper, and the recipient was a monk named Cyril, from whom their contents passed into the possession of the Abbot Joachim, whose “*Everlasting Gospel*”, founded thereon, was offered to the church as supplanting the New Testament, just as the New Testament had supplanted the Old...

The evidence that the history of the “*Everlasting Gospel*” of the thirteenth century supplied the idea of the Mormon Bible lies not only in the resemblance between the celestial announcement of both, but in the fact that both were declared to have the same important purport – as a forerunner of the end of the world – and that the name “*Everlasting Gospel*” was adopted and constantly used in connection with their message by the original leaders in the Mormon church.

If it is asked, How could Rigdon [or maybe it was Spaulding (aka Spalding)] become acquainted with the story of the original “*Everlasting Gospel*”?, the answer is that it was just such subjects that would most attract his attention and that his studies had led him into directions where the story of Cyril’s plates would probably have been mentioned... Mosheim’s *Ecclesiastical History, Ancient and Modern* was [probably] at his disposal. Editions of it had appeared in London in 1765, 1768, 1774, 1782, 1790, 1806, 1810, and 1826, and among the abridgments was one published in Philadelphia [where Rigdon lived] in 1812. In this work he could have read as follows:

“About the commencement of this [the thirteenth] century there were handed about in Italy several pretended prophecies of the famous Joachim, abbot of Sora in Calabria, whom the multitude revered as a person divinely inspired, and equal to the most illustrious prophets of ancient times. The greatest part of these predictions was contained in a certain book entitled *The Everlasting Gospel* and which was also commonly called ‘the Book of Joachim’. This Joachim, whether a real or fictitious person we shall not pretend to determine, among many other future events, foretold the destruction of the Church of Rome, whose corruptions he censured with the greatest severity, and the promulgation of a new and more perfect gospel in the age of the Holy Ghost, by a set of poor and austere ministers, whom God was to raise up and employ for that purpose.”

Here is a perfect outline of the scheme presented by the original Mormons, with Joseph as the divinely inspired prophet, and an “Everlasting Gospel”, the gift of an angel, promulgated by poor men like the traveling Mormon elders.

That Rigdon’s attention had been attracted to an “Everlasting Gospel” is proved by the constant references made to it in writings of which he had at least the supervision, from the very beginning of the church. Thus, when he preached his first sermon before a Mormon audience – on the occasion of his visit to Smith at Palmyra in 1830 – he took as his text a part of the version of *Revelation 14*, which he had put into the Mormon Bible (*1 Nephi 13*, 40), and in his sermon, as reported by Tucker, who heard it, holding the Scriptures in one hand and the Mormon Bible in the other, he said, “that they were inseparably necessary to complete the everlasting gospel of the Savior Jesus Christ.”

In the account, in Smith’s autobiography, of the first description of the buried book given to Smith by the angel, its two features are named separately, first, “an account of the former inhabitants of this continent”, and then “the fulness of the Everlasting Gospel”. That Rigdon never lost sight of the importance, in his view, of an “Everlasting Gospel” may be seen from the following quotation from one of his articles in his Pittsburg organ, *The Messenger and Advocate*, of June 15, 1845, after his expulsion from Nauvoo: “It is a strict observance of the principles of the fulness of the Everlasting Gospel of Jesus Christ, as contained in the Bible, Book of Mormon, and Book of Covenants, which alone will insure a man an inheritance in the kingdom of our God.”

The importance attached to the “Everlasting Gospel” by the founders of the church is seen further in the references to it in the *Book of Doctrine and Covenants*, which it is not necessary to cite, and further in a pamphlet by Elder Moses of New York (1842), entitled *A Treatise on the Fulness of the Everlasting Gospel, setting forth its First Principles, Promises, and Blessings*, in which he argued that the appearance of the angel to Smith was in direct line with the Scriptural teaching, and that the last days were near.

Dear: maybe you, too, will come to a conclusion similar to “the silliness of humans seems limitless”, but what I hope, more, is that you resolve always to take care with words. Demand definitions! When you hear statements such as “the Book of Mormon is a volume of holy scripture” or “the fulness of the everlasting gospel”, then if you think it’s useful to respond at all, respond with something similar to: “Say what? Whadya mean ‘holy’? Whadya mean ‘fulness’? Whadya mean ‘everlasting’?” And then, if you can tolerate ignorance longer than I, just continue with your demand for sensible definitions – until the ignoramus promoting such nonsense realizes that he doesn’t have a clue about what he’s talking about and gives up!

Different Emphases of Different “Holy Books”

But let me set that aside for now and move on to the crazy comparison (contained in the BoM’s *Introduction*) between the Bible and the BoM. Although by no means “**holy scripture**” (whatever that means!), the Bible has been important for thousands of years, showing us at least some history and some of the ideas held by primitive people. In contrast, the BoM is just a rehash of some of these primitive ideas and is not “**a record of God’s dealings with the ancient inhabitants of the Americas**”: it contains no history; it’s pure fiction!

To summarize what I mean, consider the following “table”, which contains my extremely crude “estimates” (or better, “guesstimates”) of difference emphases of the principal “holy books” of our culture.

“Holy Book”	Fraction Devoted to Religion	Fraction Devoted to Politics	Fraction Devoted to History	Percentage of Historical Fraction That’s Somewhat Reliable
Old Testament	~1/3	~1/3	~1/3	~20 %
New Testament	~2/3	~1/6	~1/6	~10 %
The Quran	~2/5	~1/2	~1/10	~30 %
The BoM	~1/10	~1/10	~4/5	0 %

Table 1. “Guesstimates” of approximate religious, political, and historical fractions of the indicated “holy books” and of the percentage of the historical fractions that are anywhere near reliable.

Of all the “guesstimates” in Table 1, Dear, only the last one listed is reliable: as near as I can guarantee you anything, I guarantee you that absolutely zero of the BoM is historically reliable!

More Historical Balderdash in the Book of Mormon

In the previous chapter, I showed some of the historical nonsense in the BoM. If you’d like to explore more, you might want to use search words such as “historical inaccuracies” + “Book of Mormon” in a good internet search engine. Thereby, you’ll find errors in the BoM not only in identifying the origin of Native Americans but also with a huge number of alleged features of their culture (including the BoM’s ridiculous claims that

* Go to other chapters *via*

they had chariots and other old-world weapons of war and associated metallurgy, linen and silk, as well as agricultural products and domesticated animals unknown until Europeans arrived).

To illustrate a few more of the silly historical claims made in the BoM, I'll again quote from the article by T.A. McMahon (referenced in the previous chapter):

...anthropologist and Mormon scholar, Thomas Murphy... summarizes the dilemma for the LDS Church: "...we don't have a single source from ancient America outside the Book of Mormon validating a single place, a single person, a single event... We don't have any of that, so the problem that DNA poses for the Book of Mormon, in a sense, exemplifies the difficulties that we already have... There's never been any evidence that would show us that there had been an Israelite migration to the New World, not in genetics or for that matter in any other source, historical, archaeological, or linguistic."

Meanwhile, though, the silliness continues in the second paragraph of the BoM's *Introduction*:

The book was written by many ancient prophets by the spirit of prophecy and revelation. [Get real!] Their words, written on gold plates, were quoted and abridged by a prophet-historian named Mormon. [Only in somebody's imagination!] The record [Gimme a break!] gives an account [a fabrication!] of two great civilizations. One came from Jerusalem in 600 B.C. [BCE], and afterward separated into two nations, known as the Nephites and the Lamanites...

Concocting the Book of Mormon

Dear: to write a "holy book" similar to the BoM, all you'd need to do is steal the manuscript of a Harry Potter or similar book before it's published, sprinkle in some "holy words" from the Bible or some similar source, and then claim that some angel told you where you could find it, written on some magical gold plates, buried in some hillside! But, Dear, if you were as conniving as was Rigdon, you would do more.

For example, you would have some "prophet" in your book describe ("by the spirit of prophecy and revelation") how the book was to be found and translated! And should you wonder how you might be able to pull off that stunt, then have a look at how Rigdon did it, with the following that he wrote into the BoM.

And it came to pass that the angel spake unto me, saying: "Look!" And I looked and beheld a man [Sidney Rigdon!], and he was dressed in a white robe. And the angel

said unto me: “Behold one of the twelve apostles of the Lamb. [Sidney Rigdon was an apostle?!] Behold, he shall see and write the remainder of these things; yea, and also many things which have been. And he shall also write concerning the end of the world. Wherefore, the things which he shall write are just and true; and behold they are written in the book which thou beheld proceeding out of the mouth of the Jew; and at the time they proceeded out of the mouth of the Jew, or, at the time the book proceeded out of the mouth of the Jew, the things which were written were plain and pure, and most precious and easy to the understanding of all men.”

“And behold, the things which this apostle of the Lamb shall write [i.e., that Rigdon will write, in the future!] are many things which thou hast seen; and behold, the remainder shalt thou see. But the things which thou shalt see hereafter thou shalt not write; for the Lord God hath ordained the apostle of the Lamb of God that he should write them [In the future, Rigdon will do the writing!] And also others who have been, to them hath he shown all things, and they have written them; and they are sealed up to come forth in their purity, according to the truth which is in the Lamb, in the own due time of the Lord, unto the house of Israel.” And I, Nephi, heard and bear record, that the name of the apostle of the Lamb was John [the Baptist, aka Sidney Rigdon] according to the word of the angel. [Translated, Dear, that says: “I, Sidney Rigdon, masquerading as John the Baptist, plan to show the world, in my writings, how to prepare for the end of the world.”] (*1 Nephi 14*, 18–27)

And the Lord will surely prepare a way for his people, unto the fulfilling of the words of Moses, which he spake, saying: “A prophet shall the Lord your God raise up unto you, like unto me; him shall ye hear in all things whatsoever he shall say unto you.” [Translated, Dear, that says: “I, Sidney, will identify a spokesman (Joseph Smith), and what he says goes!”] (*1 Nephi 22*, 20–23)

“A seer shall the Lord my God raise up, who shall be a choice seer unto the fruit of my loins... and he shall be esteemed highly... And I [God, aka Sidney Rigdon] will give unto him a commandment that he shall do none other work, save the work which I shall command him. And I will make him great in mine eyes... And he shall be great like unto Moses...” [Translated, Dear, that says: “I, Sidney, will be Joseph Smith’s puppet master, and in exchange, Smith won’t need to work for a living!”]

And thus prophesied Joseph [not Joseph Smith, but the Joseph of the BoM, who just happened to have the same name as “profit” Joe!], saying: “Behold, that seer [Joseph Smith, Jr.] will the Lord bless; and they that seek to destroy him shall be confounded [except, of course, for those who gun him down when he’s in jail!]; for this promise, which I have obtained of the Lord, of the fruit of my loins, shall be fulfilled. Behold, I am sure of the fulfilling of this promise; And his name shall be called after me [Isn’t that amazing! The prophet Joseph-of-old even knows that the future “profit” will be named Joseph! It’s a wonder he didn’t identify his last name as Smith!]; and it shall be after the name of his father.” [How about that: ~2,500 years ago, the prophet Joseph knew that the name of the “profit” Joe’s father would also be Joseph! How’s that for an amazing prophecy! ☺]...

And the Lord hath said: “I will raise up a Moses [aka Joseph Smith, Jr.]; and I will give power unto him in a rod [a “diving rod” – to find water!]; and I will give judgment unto him in writing [i.e., you can trust what he writes – because I, Sidney, will be his ghost writer!]. Yet I will not loose his tongue that he shall speak much, for I will not make him mighty in speaking. [i.e., don’t trust what little-Joe says – he’s too much of a loose cannon!]. But I [Sidney!] will write unto him my law, by the finger of mine own hand [i.e., I, Sidney, will do the writing]; and I will make a spokesman for him [whose name I won’t mention, but if it turns out to be Sidney Rigdon, then...].” (2 *Nephi* 3, 6–9 & 14–17)

Now Ammon said unto him: “I can assuredly tell thee, O king, of a man that can translate the records [namely, one Joseph Smith!]; for he has wherewith that he can look, and translate all records that are of ancient date; and it is a gift from God. And the things are called interpreters [although little-Joe calls them “peep stones”!], and no man can look in them except he be commanded, lest he should look for that he ought not and he should perish [i.e., keep your cottin’ pickin’ hands off little-Joe’s peep stone!]. And whosoever is commanded to look in them, the same is called seer... And the king said that a seer is greater than a prophet... And Ammon said that a seer is a revelator and a prophet also; and a gift which is greater can no man have, except he should possess the power of God...” [which is something reserved for me, Sidney Rigdon!].” (*Mosiah* 8, 13–16)

But, Dear, if you would be as fanciful as Rigdon, then when you magically created your own “holy book”, not only would you “prophecy” how you’d find it [☺], but you’d sprinkle in some “holy words” that would yield you bountiful returns, such as: “All grandchildren shall receive bountiful presents from their grandmother during each and every winter festival”!

In the case of the BoM, the “presents” that Rigdon wrote into it for himself were really quite amazing. In particular, as I’ll show you soon, the most amazing “present” found in the BoM (and in subsequent “revelations” in the Mormon “holy book” *Doctrine and Covenants*) is that poor old Rigdon (who was kicked out of his ministry in the Baptist Church and reprimanded and even ridiculed by leaders of the Disciples Church) finally found a way to become an official priest – even the high priest – of a new religion.

In fact, there are some hints that “something’s amiss” already in the *Introduction* of the BoM, which continues as follows:

The crowning event recorded in the Book of Mormon is the personal ministry of the Lord Jesus Christ among the Nephites soon after his resurrection. It puts forth the doctrines of the gospel, outlines the plan of salvation, and tells men what they must do to gain peace in this life and eternal salvation in the life to come.

By some strange coincidence, this “**crowning event... [putting] forth the doctrines**” just happened to result in exactly the same “doctrines” concocted by no other religious sect in the world than the Disciples Church of Upstate New York in 1829, as promoted by one of its principal preachers, Sidney Rigdon, and by his partner Parley Pratt (probably one of the co-conspirators in the plot)!

Revelations that Rigdon Rigged It!

To illustrate what I mean by the immediately preceding sentence, Dear, first I’ll quote from a criticism of the BoM written by Alexander Campbell in 1832, two years after the BoM’s first publication. Formerly, the Baptist preacher Campbell was Rigdon’s friend, mentor, and leader of the Disciples Church, i.e., all members of the Disciples Church were, in a sense, “disciples” of Alexander Campbell and his father (and therefore they were also called “Campbellites”).

...in [the] book of Mormon [is written] every error and almost every truth discussed in N. York for the last ten years. [The author of the BoM] decides all the great controversies – infant baptism, ordination, the trinity, regeneration, repentance, justification, the fall of man, the atonement, transubstantiation, fasting, penance, church government, religious experience, the call to the ministry, the general resurrection, eternal punishment, who may baptize, and even the question of freemasonry, republican government, and the rights of man.

And I know that some may be slightly suspicious that Rigdon might have rigged the whole thing, but shucks, doubters and skeptics abound. Ya just gotta believe...

To provide some hints that Parley Pratt might have been on the hoax from its beginning, I’ll quote a letter from Pratt to Rigdon, written 11 years after the BoM was published, while Pratt was in England trying to con more converts into joining Mormonism – offering them (who typically were “dirt poor”) the added attractions of a free trip to America and land! This letter (dated 8 January 1841 and posted from Manchester, England) was published in the LDS publication *Times and Seasons* (Vol. 2, No. 11., published at Nauvoo, Illinois, 1 April 1841).³ The editor of *Times and Seasons* seems to be the one who added the notes shown in “curly brackets”, {...}, correcting

³ A copy is at <http://www.centerplace.org/history/ts/v2n11.htm>.

spelling and similar; I added the italics, boldface type, and the notes in square brackets, [...].

I [Parley] must inform you [Sidney] of the fact, that we have reapt {reaped} the first fruits of Campbellism in England. A few societies have been formed in England upon that principle for some years, but have made but little progress. One society {society} of one hundred members exists about seventy miles from Manchester, at a place called Nothingham. They discovered about 2 years ago that they had been baptized for the remission of sins without authority, and that they had not obtained remission, nor the gifts of the Spirit. From that time till now, many of them have been seeking and praying for the Lord to send officers and raise up his own church.

At length, some of our writings fell into some of their hands, which soon brought two of their number to Manchester to enquire {inquire}. They attended our meeting in the hall of Manchester, were well pleased, and called at our office next morning: after spending the day in enquiring {inquiring}, etc. one of them purchased 3 *Voices of Warning* and returned home; the other, (an intelligent {intelligent} gentleman) staid {stayed} two or three days, enquired {inquired} diligently, and at length was baptized and confirmed, and went home to tell the glad tidings; this was a week or two ago. We expect to hear from them soon, and go out and baptize and organize the church there. *Tell friend Campbell to go ahead and prepare the way, the Saints will follow him up and gather the fruits.*

It therefore appears that Pratt was repeating in England what he and Rigdon had done in Ohio, gathering up the fruits (nuts!?) that Campbell had shaken from the Baptist tree!

But that possibility aside, consider next another piece of evidence that Rigdon (maybe with the help of others) rigged the whole thing; it's from Braden's 11th and 15th "Speeches" at the 1884 Braden-Kelley Debate:⁴

On page 277 [of the BoM] we have doctrine taught that is... clearly the work of Rigdon... Immersion for the remission of sins is preached... just as Disciple preachers preach it... [To] clinch the matter that it is Rigdon, immersion in the name of Christ is for the miraculous gift of the Holy Spirit, [which is] what Rigdon believed and brought from the Baptists – and the Disciples do not believe. Observe the teachings agree with the Disciples as far as Rigdon agreed with them, and disagrees with them, just where he differed from them... He contends for community of goods [viz., communism – to which Campbell objected]. He retained the Baptist idea of direct and miraculous power of the Holy Spirit. This led him to contend for baptism of the Holy Spirit, baptism to receive miraculous gifts of the Holy Ghost, imparting spiritual gifts by laying on of hands, restoration of miracles, revelations and spiritual powers of the Apostolic church. We also have the fall-down power of Rigdon's

⁴ Available at <http://www.solomonspalding.com/docs/braden/1884BnKa.htm>.

revivals, and that he was subject to himself... [Rigdon may have been an epileptic; he had a serious head injury when he was young.]

Take for instance his bitter denunciation of those who say, “We have the Bible, we need no new revelation.” He is especially bitter over this, and his book [the BoM] is full of instances of the miraculous power of the Holy Spirit, such as he contended for. We have his pet expressions, his revivalisms, his baptismal formula, his rant against infant baptism. The child is not more clearly the offspring of his parent than the religious portion of the Book of Mormon is the work of Sidney Rigdon... no one but a Disciple preacher of the time when it appeared, could have been its author, used its language, and uttered its teachings...

Unsurprisingly, that’s not the way that LDS leaders teach it. The fact that the “plan of salvation” described in the BoM is exactly the same as promoted by the Campbellites as interpreted by Sidney Rigdon is just a coincidence, say the leaders of the LDS Church, and surely Sidney Rigdon was very thankful that the dear Lord Jesus recognized that Sidney had been right, all along.

Rigdon’s Rigged Revelations

What I mean by that last bit of sarcasm, Dear, can be best demonstrated by the following “revelation” (no doubt written by Rigdon) that appears as Section 35 of the *Doctrine and Covenants* (D&C), in which I’ve put the introduction in italics and added some comments in brackets:

Revelation given to Joseph Smith the Prophet and Sidney Rigdon, at or near Fayette, New York, December 1830 [just a month or so after Rigdon “joined” the Mormons]... *As a preface to his record of this revelation the Prophet wrote: “In December Sidney Rigdon came [from Ohio] to inquire of the Lord, and with him came Edward Partridge... Shortly after the arrival of these two brethren, thus spake the Lord”* [Riiiiiiiiight].

LISTEN to the voice of the Lord your God, even Alpha and Omega, the beginning and the end, whose course is one eternal round, the same today as yesterday, and forever. [And though I could use some tricks in my bag of miracles to speak to you directly, today I’m gonna use Joseph Smith’s vocal chords, because... Well, just because!]

I am Jesus Christ, the Son of God, who was crucified for the sins of the world [at least so says the insane “Saint” Paul, although you can see in all the Gnostic Gospels that, actually, I never said any such thing!]...

Behold, verily, verily [Although I didn’t really mean to say “verily, verily”, but something seems to be wrong with Joe’s vocal chords] , I say unto my servant Sidney

[Rigdon], I have looked upon thee and thy works [and let me add that you did a great job producing the BoM!]. I have heard thy prayers [listening to myself, doncha know], and prepared thee for a greater work.

Thou [Sidney] art blessed, for thou shalt do great things. [And I bet that you're very pleased both that the Lord Jesus blessed you rather than reprimanded you for perpetrating this hoax and that the Lord Jesus speaks in King James' English.] Behold thou wast sent forth, even as John [the Baptist], to prepare the way before me... and thou knewest it not. [Well, sorry, Joe's vocal chords seem not to work to well. Of course I meant to say that others didn't know it; you, on the other hand, of course knew perfectly well that you were gonna pretend to be John the Baptist.]

Thou didst baptize by water unto repentance, but they received not the Holy Ghost [because, doncha know, that little bit of Disciple doctrine hadn't yet been invented, but now that it has been invented, well:]

But now I give unto thee a commandment, that thou shalt baptize by water, and they shall receive the Holy Ghost by the laying on of the hands, even as the apostles of old. [And exactly as you, Sidney, have been recently preaching to your congregation. And of course not the "laying on of the hands" of just anyone, but only the hands of those who are purified and sanctified, glorified and rectified, and hypnotized and hypotenized. And of course I don't know what those words mean, but I'm having lotsa fun with these vocal chords!]

And it shall come to pass [I really like Spalding's (old-come-to-pass's) "come to pass"] that there shall be a great work in the land, even among the Gentiles, for their folly and their abominations shall be made manifest in the eyes of all people [and I hope that statement makes more sense to you than it does to me],

For I am God [although some call me Sidney], and mine arm is not shortened [all rumors to the contrary notwithstanding, I didn't get it caught in any thrashing machine, although let me tell you...]; and I will show miracles, signs, and wonders, unto all those who believe on my name [although exactly how anyone can believe "on" something is another matter].

And whoso shall ask it in my name in faith, they shall cast out devils [save, of course, for we devils who've pulled off this hoax]; they shall heal the sick; they shall cause the blind to receive their sight, and the deaf to hear, and the dumb to speak, and the lame to walk. [Exactly as the clowns say in the Synoptic Gospels – although, I'd have you notice that in the Gnostic Gospels, I never made any such claims.]

And the time speedily cometh [and if it won'teth, then I don't know what to doeth] that great things are to be shown forth unto the children of men. [Not, however, to the children of women, nor to full grown men or women.]

But without faith shall not anything be shown forth except desolations upon Babylon [a prediction of the 2003 Iraq war, no doubt], the same which has made all nations drink of the wine of the wrath of her fornication. [And no, I don't know what the "wine of the wrath of fornication" is, but it's got a nice ring to it, doncha think?]

And there are none that doeth good except those who are ready to receive the fulness of my gospel, which I have sent forth unto this generation. [Those who cure cancer, develop vaccinations against horrible diseases, build better airplanes, produce the internet, develop better philosophies, stop asteroids from hitting the Earth, and similar, notwithstanding. To be "good" ya gotta be a Mormon. Any other questions?]

Wherefore, I call upon the weak things of the world, those who are unlearned and despised, to thrash the nations by the power of my Spirit. [And I especially call upon the unlearned, because those with some learning will easily see through this ruse. And notice what I want of these brutes: they are to "thrash" the nations – and if not by their learning, then they'll use their thrashers – though, let me tell ya, those damn things can do a number on your arms...]

And their arm shall be my arm, and I will be their shield and their buckler; and I will gird up their loins, and they shall fight manfully for me; and their enemies shall be under their feet; and I will let fall the sword in their behalf, and by the fire of mine indignation will I preserve them. [Fight, brutalize, kill, kill, kill... until a new theocracy, led by Sidney Rigdon and Joseph Smith, rules the world! Hmm. "Hey Sidney, do you really want me to say that? We could get into a helluva lot of trouble for promoting the violent overthrow of the government! Oh, okay. Maybe you're right. Maybe nobody with any brains will pay any attention to us."]

And the poor and the meek shall have the gospel preached unto them, and they shall be looking forth for the time of my coming, for it is nigh at hand... ["Hey Sidney, how about telling them when it will be? After hearing the same stuff for nearly 2,000 years, surely people are getting tired of hearing that the end of the world is 'nigh at hand'."]

And I have sent forth the fulness of my gospel by the hand of my servant Joseph; and in weakness have I blessed him [Whose weakness: God's or Joseph's?!];

And I have given unto him the keys of the mystery of those things which have been sealed, even things which were from the foundation of the world, and the things which shall come from this time until the time of my coming, if he abide in me, and if not, another will I plant in his stead. ["You hear that Joseph? You mind me, or else I, Sidney, will throw you out on your ear!"]

Wherefore [Sidney], watch over him [Joseph] that his faith fail not, and it shall be given by the Comforter, the Holy Ghost [aka Sidney Rigdon, himself] that knoweth all things.

And a commandment I [Sidney] give unto thee [Sidney! – through my mouthpiece Joseph, pretending to be Jesus, which all-in-all, is a great way of talking to myself, making the Wizard of Oz drool with envy!] – that thou shalt write for him; and the scriptures shall be given, even as they are in mine own bosom, to the salvation of mine own elect [Which means (in case anybody missed it) that I, Sidney, plan to re-write the Bible – which is what Alexander Campbell said he'd do, but I'll show him who's better at re-writing the Bible, who's better at starting a new church (the Campbellites be damned), and who's better at speaking for God (even as God's words are in his "own bosom"). So there! And so, from here on out, when I, Sidney, write, then all of you out there better realize that it's coming directly from God!];

For they will hear my voice, and shall see me, and shall not be asleep, and shall abide the day of my coming; for they shall be purified, even as I am pure [I am pure, I am pure! Just as written in the Egyptian Book of the Dead!].

And now I say unto you, tarry with him, and he shall journey with you; forsake him not, and surely these things shall be fulfilled.

And inasmuch as ye do not write, behold, it shall be given unto him to prophesy; and thou shalt preach my gospel and call on the holy prophets to prove his words, as they shall be given him. [Teamwork, teamwork! Go, team!]

Keep all the commandments and covenants by which ye are bound; and I will cause the heavens to shake for your good, and Satan shall tremble and Zion shall rejoice upon the hills and flourish... [and we'll make a fortune from the poor suckers who buy into this con game!]

Sorry, Dear, but if I don't respond sarcastically to such nonsense, I don't know if I could continue. Seriously, Dear, can you imagine anything more ludicrous? The story promoted by the LDS Church is that Smith worked for years translating the "golden bible", allegedly with no help from anyone except a few bungling scribes, heroically suffering through "many unlawful measures taken by evil designing persons to destroy me, and also the work", and yet within a few months of the BoM finally being published, the LDS leaders want people "to believe" that Rigdon dropped in, allegedly meeting Smith for the first time, and Rigdon is given control of the reins of the whole operation! How could it possibly be so? To believe such nonsense, a person would need to be a moron!

And actually, there's a pretty strong hint in the above "revelation" that Rigdon wanted the world to know that he had always been the puppet's master, pulling Smith's strings. Thus, in the above Rigdon had Smith "reveal":

Thou [Sidney] art blessed, for thou shalt do great things. Behold thou wast sent forth, even as John [the Baptist], to prepare the way before me...

Meanwhile, as reported in Section 13 of the D&C there is (with it's introduction in italics):

Ordination of Joseph Smith and Oliver Cowdery to the Aaronic Priesthood along the bank of the Susquehanna River, near Harmony, Pennsylvania, May 15, 1829... The ordination was done by the hands of an angel, who announced himself as John, the same that is called John the Baptist in the New Testament...

UPON you my fellow servants, in the name of Messiah I confer the Priesthood of Aaron, which holds the keys of the ministering of angels, and of the gospel of repentance, and of baptism by immersion for the remission of sins...

And in Section 27 of the D&C there is (allegedly spoken by God):

And also John the son of Zacharias, which Zacharias he (Elias) visited and gave promise that he should have a son, and his name should be John [the Baptist], and he should be filled with the spirit of Elias;

Which John I have sent unto you, my servants, Joseph Smith, Jun., and Oliver Cowdery, to ordain you unto the first priesthood which you have received, that you might be called and ordained even as Aaron...

That is, Dear, in Section 35 of the D&C, Rigdon is identified “**even as John the Baptist**” and it was this same “**John the Baptist**” (aka Rigdon) who earlier had conferred “**the first priesthood**” on Joe Jr. and Oliver Cowdery in May 1829, months before it's alleged that Rigdon had ever met Smith or Cowdery. What silliness! What skullduggery! What priestcraft! What ludicrousness!

Rigdon's Ridiculous Priesthoods

Actually, Dear, there's even more silliness, here, than is revealed by the above, but it contains more details about the Mormon priesthood than I care to show you. I mention it (without showing you details), because later in this chapter, you'll find a report of another example of Sidney Rigdon becoming angry, this time seemingly at Cowdery, but his anger is actually directed at Smith – because Smith not only lost control of the first 116 pages of the BoM but also (apparently) never understood the subtleties of the distinction that Rigdon ridiculously made between the Aaronic and Melchisedec priesthoods (namely, that the first was for baptizing for

remission of sins and that the second was for the “laying on of hands” to gain “the holy spirit”). If you can temporarily ignore those details of the difference, the result is actually quite humorous – but again, to get to the punch line, a person really needs to struggle.

Nonetheless, even without those details (which demolish LDS claims that theirs is the only legitimate priesthood), a bit of the humor in this silly “priestcraftery” can be seen without delving into too many details. To show you this, I’ll quote a little from (and try to make some improvements to the punctuation in) Chapters 3 of the 1920 book by Evans (*Forty Years in the Mormon Church: Why I Left It!*), already referenced.

The general claim made by Mormonism is that Joseph Smith and Oliver Cowdery were called of God to the Aaronic priesthood by an Angel, who said he was John the Baptist, that this Angel ordained them by the laying on of hands, and thus the Aaronic priesthood was restored to earth...

With regard to this ordination by John the Baptist, Oliver Cowdery, a few years after (when he left the church and denounced Joseph Smith as guilty of most every kind of sin, including murder), says “...the voice of the Angel who claimed to be John the Baptist was strikingly similar with the voice of Sidney Rigdon” (this is a mild way of telling the world that the Angel who ordained Smith and himself was none other than Sidney Rigdon)...

...the ordinations of Smith and Cowdery are about as big a mess as anything that has ever found its way into history. The Aaronic priesthood, conferred by ordination under the hands of the Angel John the Baptist, [was] counted as a thing of naught, [because] Smith [then] ordained Cowdery and Cowdery ordained Smith to this same priesthood. Then [the Bible’s] Peter, James, and John [allegedly] ordain these same two men to the Melchisedec priesthood, and again they set this at naught and proceed to ordain each other.

What would we think of the twelve apostles of Bible-times after Jesus had ordained them and said (*John 15, 16*): “**Ye have not chosen me but I have chosen you and ordained you,**” if they were to set that ordination aside and proceed to ordain each other again? So much for the Smith ordinations! He and Cowdery knew well that the Angelic ordinations were invented by Smith. Cowdery, as already referred to, admits in effect that the John the Baptist was Sidney Rigdon, the dark horse of Mormonism...

And if you’re thinking, Dear, that no priestcraft could possibly have been established *via* such silly shenanigans, then I’m sorry to suggest that you need more experience: as I’ll try to at least partially show you in **Yx**, all priesthoods were established *via* similar skullduggery!

Rigdon's Resolve to Rule the Roost

Meanwhile, how Rigdon managed to “officially” become “head” of the “new church” was, of course, by another of Smith’s “revelations” (no doubt written by Rigdon). Thus, as described in Linn’s 1902 book (already referenced):

The form of church government, as worked out in the early days, is set forth in the *Book of Doctrine and Covenants*. The first officers provided for were the twelve apostles, and the next the elders, priests, teachers, and deacons... The church was loosely governed for the first years after its establishment at Kirtland. A guiding power was provided for in a revelation of March 8, 1833 [Section 90 of the D&C], when Smith was told by the Lord that Rigdon and F. G. Williams [another ex-Disciple of Christ member] were accounted as equal with him “in holding the keys of this last kingdom.” These three first held the famous office of the First Presidency, representing the Trinity.

Apparently, however, not everyone believed that it was God who arranged for Rigdon’s appointment. In particular, one of the three principal “witnesses” for the BoM, the fellow “money digger” David Whitmer (more about whom I’ll mention in later paragraphs) wrote the following about the Mormon priesthoods in his *Address to All Believers in Christ*, which he composed after he, too, quit the LDS Church.

Now Brethren, seeing they had no High Priests in the church of Christ of old and none in the church of Christ in these last days until almost two years after its beginning – when the leaders began to drift into error; remembering the fact of the revelation being changed two years after it was given to include High Priests... In no place in the word of God does it say that an Elder is after the order of Melchisedec, or after the order of the Melchisedec Priesthood... This matter of “priesthood”, since the days of Sydney [sic] Rigdon, has been the great hobby and stumbling-block of the Latter Day Saints... This matter of the two orders of priesthood... all originated in the mind of Sydney Rigdon. He explained these things to Brother Joseph in his way, out of the old Scriptures, and got Brother Joseph to inquire, etc. He would inquire and as mouthpiece speak out the revelations just as they had it fixed up in their hearts...

Such accusations, however, were made by Whitmer after he left the LDS Church (whose leaders labeled him as an “apostate”, i.e., “**somebody who has renounced a religious or political belief or allegiance**”). An entirely different perspective is available from Sidney Rigdon, after he, too, had left the LDS church and returned to Pittsburg (because, after Joseph Smith was killed in Illinois, Rigdon lost his bid to rule the roost, out-foxed by Brigham

Young, just as Rigdon had been out-foxed by Smith). Thus, as given in Linn’s book, we learn of the reason for the method of the Church’s governance from Rigdon himself:

One person succeeded in drawing out from Rigdon in his later years a few words on his relations with the Mormon church. This was Charles L. Woodward, a New York bookseller, who some years ago made an important collection of Mormon literature. While making this collection he sent an inquiry to Rigdon, and received a reply, dated May 25, 1873. After apologizing for his handwriting on account of his age and paralysis, the letter says:

The Church of Latter-Day Saints had three books that they acknowledged as Canonical, the Bible, the Book of Mormon, and the Commandments [which became the D&C]. *For the existence of that church there had to be a revelater, one who received the word of the Lord* [i.e., Smith receiving his instructions from me]; [and] *a spokesman* [i.e., me!], *one inspired of God to expound all revelation* [i.e., explain them, because Smith couldn’t understand Rigdon’s “revelations”!], so that the church might all be of one faith. Without these two men the Church of Latter-Day Saints could not exist. [Italics added.]

Rigdon burned all his old theological bridges behind him when he entered into partnership with Smith, and his entire course after his return to Pittsburg only adds to the proof that he was the originator of the Mormon Bible, and that his object in writing it was to enable him to be the head of a new church.

The Book of Mormon’s Reliance on the “Proof-by-Pleasure Fallacy”

But in a way, Dear, all of the above has been just a “preamble” to a major “policy issue”, which next appears in the BoM’s *Introduction* and which I now want to address. It’s what I’ve identified in earlier chapters (e.g., see Chapter **If** entitled “Finding Immortal Fallacies”) as the “Proof-by-Pleasure Logical Fallacy.” Below, I’ll quote Rigdon’s use of this concept in full [and add some notes in brackets], as described in the BoM’s Introduction.

We invite all men everywhere [no mention is made of inviting women, but let’s assume that ‘men’ is a gender-neutral word!] **to read the Book of Mormon, to ponder in their hearts** [which would be a neat trick if it could be done, but let’s assume that it’s a figure of speech meaning ‘think about’] **the message it contains** [that Native Americans are displaced Hebrews, that black skin is a curse from God, or that Rigdon’s modifications of the doctrines of the Disciples Church were sound policies?!], **and then to ask God, the Eternal Father, in the name of Christ** [is someone seriously suggesting that we ask a figment of primitive people’s imagination a question?!] **if the book is true.** [What?! To test the “truth” of some speculation or hypothesis, we’re to ask God?! How about subjecting predictions of the hypothesis to experimental tests? Has anyone ever heard of the scientific method?] **Those who pursue this course** [have rocks in their heads!] **and ask in faith** [“Ask in faith”!]

‘Faith’ in what? That the sun will come up tomorrow? That the scientific method is a sound method to test hypotheses? Or that some giant Jabberwock rides across the sky on a flying pink elephant? **will gain a testimony of its truth** [a ‘testimony’?] **and divinity** [the BoM is “divine”?] **by the power of the Holy Ghost.** [You mean that you “think” that ghosts exist and have the ‘power’ to make something ‘divine’? Have you considered the possibility of using only words that have some meaning?!]

Seriously, Dear, please never, Never, NEVER participate in such a preposterous policy! The same idiotic idea is advocated in all such “revealed religions”, namely, to encourage people to rely on unevaluated emotions rather than to think and to evaluate by themselves, to rely on some authority figure rather than their own mental abilities, and to trust a bunch of con artists rather than have faith in themselves.

Now, Dear, I’ve already written quite a bit about the subject of faith (in chapters **Ig** through **Ii**) and will write more in later chapters (in **S**, dealing with Science, and in **T**, dealing with “Truth”); therefore, here I’ll try to be brief. The main points I want to emphasize are the following.

First, Dear, please realize that a billion-or-so years of evolution of these DNA molecules have led us to the state of possessing some quite good instincts and associated emotions, e.g., to hate getting hurt and therefore to duck when a projectile is heading toward our heads, to fear strange sounds in the dark and therefore to seek more light, to feel lonely and therefore seek mates, generally to love life and therefore instinctively to try to survive, and for those of us who’ve evolved sufficiently, to love strawberry milkshakes more than chocolate or vanilla!

Yet, Dear, experience demonstrates that there can be substantial value (of course with ‘value’ measured relative to our trio of survival goals) if we challenge the forcefulness of some of our instincts, because (for example) unconstrained instincts to mate (and even to drink strawberry milkshakes!) can lead to undesirable consequences. In addition, experiences with observed regularities in Nature (such as the regular way that the Sun returns every day and the way that mothers generally treat their children with care) can lead us to expectations or “beliefs” or “faiths” that such regularities will continue.

But, Dear, it would be doubly foolish to assuage your instinctive fear of death with faith in some observed regularities of the universe to agree with still-another-claim that some giant Jabberwock in the sky will provide you

* Go to other chapters *via*

with eternal life in paradise – provided, of course, that you pay the con artists what they want for peddling such nonsense. Such claims, Dear, are just ideas. Please evaluate all such ideas using the scientific method: ask what data the hypothesis allegedly summarizes, what testable predictions the theory provides, and then test these predictions by performing experiments.

And if there are no testable predictions (or if the predictions can be tested only by dead people!) then junk the theory. In particular, Dear, I don't know if any suggestion could be sillier – if any suggestion could be dumber – if any suggestion could be more ludicrous – than “to ponder in [your hearts] the message it [the BoM...or any book!] contains, and then to ask God, the Eternal Father, in the name of Christ if the book is true.”⁵

Instead of following the BoM's recommendation to rely on your emotions, instead of being tricked by the seductive “proof-by-pleasure fallacy” (i.e., the faulty idea that if it feels good then it's true!), please, Dear, evaluate relevant and reliable data to see what they can reveal and then test all predictions of any hypothesis. In the case of the BoM, seek data about the origins of both Native Americans and the Book of Mormon. If you do, I'm certain you'll conclude that the theory proposed in the BoM about the origin of Native Americans is silly and that the BoM is the product of a horrible hoax perpetrated by a bunch of con artists, probably led by Rigdon.

Possible Reasons for Perpetrating the Mormon Hoax

Now Dear, you might wonder something similar to: “Why would Rigdon rig such a hoax? Why would Smith go along with it?” Of course I can't answer such questions with certainty (it's not even certain how the hoax was perpetrated), but consistent with what Nietzsche wrote (“One will rarely err if extreme actions be ascribed to vanity, ordinary actions to habit, and mean actions to fear”), I suspect (and later will give evidence to support) that Rigdon's motive for his “extreme action” (creating the entire hoax) was vanity: in what appears to be his insanity, he seems to have been convinced that he knew how to “save” people from the impending end of the world (i.e., the return of Jesus).

⁵ Dear: not only would buying into such a scheme be foolish, it can be extremely dangerous to your mental health. Explaining that statement, however, would take quite a while; if you want to examine the double-binds that such a scheme has trapped so many people, then you may want to read the recent book by Marion Stricker entitled *LIFE AFTER MORMONISM and THE DOUBLE-BIND: The Pattern of The Double-Bind in Mormonism*, available at <http://www.exmormon.org/pattern/index.htm>.

On the other hand, the “**mean actions**” of Smith (and his family, the Whitmer family, Harris, Cowdery, and Pratt) seem to have been primarily motivated by fear (of poverty) – or if portrayed less charitably, by greed. Thus, Dear, if you dig into the data, I suspect you’ll be led to the conclusion that essentially all of them (and especially all members of the Smith and Whitmer families as well as Martin Harris, Oliver Cowdery, and Parley Pratt) perpetrated the hoax solely for the chance to make some money without engaging in any physical labor.

That a major purpose of the entire process was to rob people of their property is clearly indicated in the BoM. For example, at 3 *Nephi* 23, 8–10, Rigdon has Jesus say:

“Will a man rob God? Yet ye have robbed me [Christ]. But ye say: ‘Wherein have we robbed thee?’ In tithes and offerings. Ye are cursed with a curse, for ye have robbed me, even this whole nation. Bring ye all the tithes into the storehouse, that there may be meat in my house...”

As I’ll show you in a later chapter, Rigdon later specified (*via* Smith, in the D&C) details about how people were to put “meat in my house”.

Rigdon’s Stated Reasons for Endorsing the Book of Mormon

It appears, also, that Rigdon (who always had suffered from poverty) was not averse to picking up some easy money, but it appears that Rigdon’s prime motive was vanity. Analyses of available data suggest that Rigdon might even have had quite an admirable motive (trying to help humanity), but that he was mentally unbalanced. Here, though, I’m not going to provide you with sufficient data to permit you to evaluate those tentative assessments of Rigdon’s motive and mental state. Nonetheless, I’ll include some quotations dealing with both his mental state and his “conversion” to Mormonism. From the first (rather-long!) quotation, you can begin to get an idea of what seems to have been “driving” Rigdon. In addition, it demonstrates how Rigdon applied “his” idiotic idea of “asking God for a sign” to test “the truth” of the BoM.

The following was written by someone who apparently was a friend (or at least an acquaintance) of Rigdon and who visited him soon after Rigdon’s (faked) conversion to Mormonism. It provides one of the few observations of the affair from an “outsider’s” viewpoint. This quotation⁶ is from the 7

⁶ The original is at <http://www.solomonspalding.com/docs/1831i05a.htm>.

May 1831 issue (Vol. 1, No. 10) of a periodical called *The Evangelical Inquirer*, published in Dayton, Ohio; it's signed simply with the initials "MSC", who seems to have been Matthew S. Clapp, another leader (with Rigdon) in the Disciples of Christ church in Mentor, Ohio. In most of what follows, the author (MSC) identifies Rigdon as "Mr. R."; I've added the italics, a few notes in brackets, and here-and-there, I've tried to clean up some of the punctuation.

About the last of October, 1830, four men [Parley Pratt, Oliver Cowdery, Peter Whitmer, and Ziba Peterson], claiming to be divinely inspired, came from Manchester and Palmyra, Ontario county, N.Y., bringing a pretended revelation, entitled the "Book of Mormon" [which had been first published the previous month]. They came to the brethren of the reformation [i.e., members of the Disciples Church, although Rigdon had withdrawn his congregation from membership from "the Campbellite fellowship" a few months earlier]⁷ in Mentor [Ohio], saluted them as brethren, and professed to rejoice at finding a people walking according to the scriptures of truth, and acknowledging no other guide [i.e., following the doctrines that Rigdon had been preaching – before the BoM was published! – which of course raised substantial suspicion that a hoax was being perpetrated].

They [the four Mormons] professed to have no commands for them [the members of the Rigdon's congregation], nevertheless, they called upon them to receive their mission and book as from Heaven, which [book] they said chiefly concerned the western Indians, as being an account of their origin, and a prophecy of their final conversion to Christianity, and make them a white and delightsome people, and be reinstated in the possession of their lands of which they have been despoiled by the whites. [Which was really quite an amazingly perceptive and effective "sales pitch" – and both Parley Pratt and Oliver Cowdery were former salesman. The "sales pitch" was something similar to: "Well, what we have really isn't for you, it's for the 'Indians', but if you're interested, well then..."]

When called upon for testimony, [the four Mormons] appealed (like Mahomet [i.e., Muhammad]) to the internal evidences of their book. The book was read [by whom isn't mentioned] and pronounced a silly fabrication. When further pressed upon the subject, they [the four Mormons] required the brethren to humble themselves before God, and pray for a sign from heaven. [That is, Dear, these four "Mormon missionaries" were promoting the insane policy, now advocated in the BoM's *Introduction* but also contained with the BoM's text (at *Moroni 10*, 3), of testing hypothesis by asking for "signs" from God – rather than applying the scientific method.]

⁷ See p.11 of the 1971 book by F. Mark McKiernan entitled *The Voice of One Crying in the Wilderness: Sidney Rigdon, Religious Reformer 1793–1876* (at <http://sidneyrigdon.com/books/McK1971a.htm>).

They [the four visitors – although in another report it states that only two of them] took up their abode with the pastor of the congregation (Sidney Rigdon) [which otherwise would seem rather surprising, except that Parley Pratt was previously a Disciples preacher, tutored by Rigdon, and Rigdon probably was the prime producer of the BoM!], who read their book and partly condemned it [or pretended to do so!] – but two days afterwards, [Rigdon] was heard to confess his conviction of its truth [Surprise, surprise!].

Immediately the subtlety and duplicity of these men [I assume the author means the subtlety and duplicity of the four Mormons] were manifest – as soon as they saw a number [of the congregation] disposed to give heed to them, then it was they bethought themselves of making a party [which seems to mean that the four Mormons then proposed a “baptismal party”] – then it was they declared that their book contained a new covenant, to come under which the disciple must be re-immersed [i.e., re-baptized]. When called upon to answer concerning their pretended covenant, whether it was distinct from that mentioned in *Heb. VIII*, 10-13,⁸ they would equivocate, and would say (to use their own words) “on the large scale, the covenant is the same, but in some things it is different.” Immediately they made a party – seventeen persons were immersed by them in one night.

At this Mr. Rigdon seemed much displeased, and when they came next day to his house [which I don’t understand, Dear, because the author wrote that they were staying at Rigdon’s house!], he withstood them to the face – showed them that what they had done was entirely without precedent in the holy scriptures – for they had immersed those persons that they [those baptized] might work miracles as well as come under the said covenant – showed them that the apostles baptized for the remission of sins – but miraculous gifts were conferred by the imposition of hands. [That is, Dear (and as I mentioned earlier that I’d show you), Rigdon was apparently “displeased” because Cowdery *et al.* hadn’t adequately learned the rules for Rigdon’s new religion (i.e., Rigdon’s rules for Rigdon’s religion!): according to Rigdon, people were to be baptized by Aaronic priests (a priesthood which he – aka John the Baptist – had conferred on Smith and Cowdery) for “remission of sins” but only Melchisedec priests (a priesthood that Rigdon had not yet bestowed on Cowdery) could pass out the “Holy Spirit”, and thereby “miraculous gifts”, by “imposition of hands”!] But when pressed upon the point, they justified themselves by saying it was on their part merely a compliance with the solicitations of those persons. [“We do whatever the people want – and besides, Sidney, we can’t follow all the petty little details of your priesthods!”]

⁸ Dear: This apparently refers to the “covenant” mention in the New Testament’s *A Letter to Hebrews*, claimed to be written by “Saint” Paul but now almost universally recognized to be a forgery, written in about 200 CE by an anonymous cleric. But as you can check by yourself, it wouldn’t have been a bad “covenant” (if it had any meaning!), because when interpreted liberally, it states (in effect): no more clerics will be needed (“They shall not teach one another, saying to brother and fellow citizens, ‘Know the Lord!’ For all of them, high and low, shall know me...”) nor will any “holy books” be needed (“I [God] will set my laws in their understanding and write them on their hearts”), i.e., we’ll know all that we need to know by ourselves, instinctively and intuitively. I could buy into that one – so long as data analysis isn’t prohibited! By all means let’s have done with all the clerics of the world!

Mr. Rigdon again called upon them for proof of the truth of their book and mission: they then related the manner in which they obtained faith, which was by praying for a sign, and an angel was shown unto them. [So the visiting four Mormons had adopted the policy, promoted in the BoM’s Introduction (and in its text) to test for “truth” by seeking a “supernatural sign”.] Here Mr. Rigdon showed them from the scriptures the possibility of their being deceived: “For Satan himself is transformed into an angel of light” – but said Cowdery, “Do you think if I should go to my Heavenly Father with all sincerity, and pray to him in the name of Jesus Christ, that he would not show me an angel – that he would suffer Satan to deceive me?” Mr. Rigdon replied, “if the heavenly Father had ever promised to show you an angel, to confirm anything, he would not suffer you to be deceived, for says the apostle John, ‘this is the confidence we have with him, if we ask things according to his will, he hearkens to us’.” But, he continued, “if you ask the heavenly Father to show you an angel when he has never promised you such a thing, if the Devil never had an opportunity of deceiving you before, you give him one now.” [Notice, Dear, how Rigdon clung to exact wording in the Bible, apparently not appreciating that the Bible had been concocted by a bunch of conniving con artists – just as he concocted the BoM!]

However, about two days after, Mr. R. was persuaded to tempt God by asking this sign..., he received a sign, and was convinced that Mormonism was true and divine...⁹ The Monday following he was baptized. On the morning of the preceding day he had an appointment to preach in the Methodist chapel at Kirtland. He arose to address the congregation apparently much affected and deeply impressed. He seemed exceedingly humble, confessed the sins of his former life, his great pride, ambition, vainglory, &c. &c. [Dear, recall Nietzsche’s assessment: “One will rarely err if extreme actions be ascribed to vanity...”] After he [Rigdon] was baptized, he professed to be exceedingly joyful, and said he would not be where he was three days ago for the universe. When reminded of the scriptural objection which he had made against praying for that which was not promised, he imputed his reasoning to pride, carnality, and the influence of the evil one... [Rigdon could apparently rationalize any position he took!]

About three weeks after Mr. R. was baptized by Oliver Cowdery, he went to the state of New York, to see Joseph Smith, Jr. while Cowdery, with his three companions, proceeded on to the western Indians...

Feb. 1. – Mr. Rigdon just returned from the state of New York. His irascible temper only left him for a little season. [!] Two friends went from Mentor to see him – required of him a reason for his present hope, and for his belief in the Book of

⁹ Incidentally, Dear, that “about two days” conflicts with what’s written in The LDS publication *Times and Seasons* (Vol. 4, No. 12, 1843), allegedly written by Smith but probably written by Rigdon: “after a fortnight [underlining added] from the time the book [the BoM] was put in his hands, he [Rigdon] was fully convinced of the truth of the work, by a revelation from Jesus Christ, which was made known to him in a remarkable manner, so that he could exclaim ‘flesh and blood hath not revealed it unto me, but my father which is in heaven’.”

Mormon; he declined, saying he was weary, having just come off his journey, had lost much sleep, and the like. After a number of words had passed, by way of solicitation on one side, and refusal on the other, one of the friends from Mentor said he thought there was no more evidence to confirm the Book of Mormon than the Koran of Mahomet [Muhammad]. At this Mr. Rigdon seemed very angry – rose up and said, “Sir, you have insulted me in my own house – I command silence – If people that come to see us cannot treat us with civility, they may walk out of the door as soon as they please.” The person then made some apology. Mr. R. said he had borne everything, he had been insulted and trampled upon by old and young, and he would bear it no longer. The other of the friends from Mentor expressed his astonishment that a man who had just been exhorting others in so meek and humble a manner, as Mr. R. had been doing a few minutes before, should manifest such a spirit. Mr. R. denied that he was angry. The two friends bade him good night and departed.

Two days after, I accompanied several friends to Mr. R.’s residence, we found him in conversation with a Methodist presiding elder – that being soon broken off, one of my friends modestly approached Mr. R. and solicited him to give some reason for his present faith. Mr. R. with great show of good nature, commenced a long detail of his researches after the character of Joseph Smith; he declared that even his enemies had nothing to say against his character; he had brought a transcript from the docket of two magistrates, where Smith had been tried as a disturber of the peace, which testified that he was honorably acquitted. But this was no evidence to us that the Book of Mormon was divine. He then spoke of the supernatural gifts with which he said Smith was endowed; he said he could translate the scriptures from any language in which they were now extant, and could lay his finger on every interpolation in the sacred writings, adding, that he had proved him in all these things. But my friends knowing that Mr. Rigdon had no knowledge of any language but his own vernacular tongue, asked him how he knew these things, to which Mr. R. made no direct reply...

Mr. Smith arrived at Kirtland the next day; and being examined concerning his supernatural gifts by a scholar, who was capable of testing his knowledge, he confessed he knew nothing of any language, save the king’s English...

We then asked Mr. R. what object we could have in receiving the Book of Mormon – whether it enjoined a single virtue that the Bible did not, or whether it mentioned and prohibited a single additional vice, or whether it exhibited a new attribute of Deity? He said it did not. “The Book of Mormon,” said he, “is just calculated to form and govern the millennial church; the old revelation was never calculated for that, nor could it accomplish that object; and without receiving the Book of Mormon, there is no salvation for anyone into whose hands it shall come.” He said faith in the Book of Mormon was only to be obtained by asking the Lord concerning it. To this scriptural objections were made. He then said that if we had not familiarity enough with our creator to ask of him a sign, we were no Christians; and, that if God would not condescend to his creatures, in this way, he was no better than Jaggernaut! [Maybe this ‘Jaggernaut’ is the same as ‘Juggernaut’, which is “a form of the Hindu god Krishna” and “a force that is relentlessly destructive, crushing, and insensitive.”]

Now, courteous reader, I have given a simple statement of facts for the purpose that you might not be deceived by the pretensions of these false prophets. They proclaim the ancient gospel, putting their own appendages to it. When they think it will best suit their purpose, they say nothing about the Book of Mormon, and at other times make it their chief topic. Mr. R. said to me, since he became a Mormonite, that it was no part of his religion to defend the Book of Mormon, he only wished the people to give heed to the old revelation, to humble themselves, and enter into the privileges which it conferred upon its believing subjects. Again, there is no salvation without receiving the Book of Mormon! Mr. R. now blames Cowdery for attempting to work miracles, and says that it was not intended to be confirmed in that way. How then are we to obtain faith? Does the book offer any internal evidence of its divinity? If it does, it has not been discovered. It contains nothing but what might have been, and evidently was, borrowed from the sacred writings [the Bible] and from the history of the world [or the assumed “history” of the world!].

Sorry to quote so much, Dear, but at least I found it interesting, both to gain some insight into how an outsider viewed all these shenanigans and to get some idea of Rigdon’s thoughts.

Before commenting more on Rigdon’s thoughts, I want to add another quote, describing “the sign” Rigdon allegedly received. This is from the 1888 book by James H. Kennedy entitled *The Early Days of Mormonism*.¹⁰

Rigdon was finally prevailed upon to promise that he would also ask God for a sign, but would not then further commit himself in the direction of Mormonism. This discussion, and others of the same tenor, were carried on in the presence of the gaping populace, and each point made by the visitors had its weight and effect in preparing the way for many future conversions. The excitement was at a fever heat, and was by no means lessened when Rigdon appeared after a seclusion of a couple of days and announced his complete surrender. With an apparent earnestness of manner, and with such eloquent words as he could so surely command, he declared that he had asked for a sign, and had received a revelation from heaven that Mormonism was true. He said that he had prayed for the sign, and explained the response that was vouchsafed him, in the following language: “To my astonishment, I saw the different orders of professing Christians passing before my eyes, with their hearts exposed to view, and they were as corrupt as corruption itself [Whatever that means!]. That society to which I belonged also passed before my eyes, and to my astonishment it was as corrupt as the others. Last of all that little man, who brought me the Book of Mormon, passed before me with his heart open, and it was as pure as an angel; and this was a testimony from God that the Book of Mormon was a divine revelation.”

¹⁰ Available at <http://thedigitalvoice.com/enigma/1888KenB.htm>.

Now, Dear, I admit that it's difficult for me to follow Rigdon's thoughts: they seem so inconsistent. How could he, in one instance, criticize Cowdery for seeking a "sign" that wasn't "promised" and then almost immediately seek such a sign himself? How could he (knowing the Bible as well as he apparently did) seek a "sign" when the Bible has Jesus say "It's a wicked generation that seeks a sign"? Further, knowing that, how could he state: "If God would not condescend to his creatures [to show us a "sign", then] he was no better than Jaggernaut!"?

Finally, how could Rigdon be convinced by the "sign" he claimed he received? Apparently he had a vision (maybe in a dream) of people passing before his eyes "with their hearts exposed to view... and that little man who brought me the book of Mormon passed before me with his heart open, and it was as pure as an angel." How pure is a heart if it's "as pure as an angel"? What is a "pure heart": one whose arteries aren't clogged with cholesterol? How is the "divinity" of a book related to the "purity" of the heart of one its promoters? And more generally, what has any characteristic of any promoter got to do with "the truth" of what's being promoted? Undoubtedly many people with "pure hearts" (by which I mean "laudable morality") promoted the concept that the world was a flat plate, and on the other hand, the behavior of a Newton, Einstein, Feynman... has absolutely nothing to do with the validity of the theories they promoted!

Maybe another quotation from Kennedy's book (already referenced) provides more insight:

An accident which occurred in his [Rigdon's] early boyhood may have had something to do with his *erratic course* [italics added] in after-life, if we adopt the theory of his brother, Dr. L. Rigdon, of Hamilton, Ohio, who said of him that "when quite a boy, living with his father some fifteen miles south of Pittsburgh, he was thrown from a horse. His foot entangling in a stirrup he was dragged some distance before relieved. In this accident he received such a contusion of the brain as ever afterward seriously affected his character, and in some respects his conduct." Dr. Rigdon was of the opinion that Sidney was a little deranged ever after this mishap. "His mental powers did not seem to be impaired, but the equilibrium of his intellectual exertions seems thereby to have been sadly affected. He still manifested great mental activity and power, but was to an equal degree inclined to run into wild and visionary views on almost every question; hence he was a fit subject for any new movement in the religious world."

From this assessment by his brother (who was an medical doctor), both possibilities seem to remain open: that Rigdon was duped by Pratt,

Cowdery, et al. or that he was the prime move of the entire hoax. It's for this and other reasons that I gave my "guesstimate" of 70% chance that Rigdon rigged the whole thing and 30% for the probability that the BoM was produced by others (Pratt, Smith, and others already listed).

In Sum: Just Another Group of Religious Fanatics

In any event, Dear, understanding such people isn't a prerequisite to being wary of them. Please be careful of anyone whose mind seems totally occupied with messages in some "holy book" and please be aware that there are many such people, including Christian fanatics (such as Billy Graham, Pat Robertson, James Dobson, Rick Warren, etc.) and similar fanatics in other religions and sects (including Judaism, Islam, Hare Krishna's, the Moonies, and so on).

All of them are like children with their minds caught in mental stirrups dangling from their holy books and dragged along by the some galloping theory about some giant Jabberwock in the sky. Their prime goal seems to be similarly entangle other people. They're usually prepared to go to almost any extreme to "prove" to you that their "holy books" are "true" – and I essentially guarantee you that they'll never say something similar to "Why don't you test our ideas using the scientific method?" In contrast, Dear, I strongly urge you to apply the scientific method to test the validity of anything – of course including any statements I've made in this book.

Illustrative of the claims of religious fanatics is Joseph Smith's (or Sidney Rigdon's) claim that's included in the BoM's *Introduction*: "I told the brethren that the Book of Mormon was the most correct of any book on earth..." Really? The BoM is more correct than Euclid's *Elements of Geometry*, Archimedes' *Mechanical Theorems*, Newton's *Principia*, Maxwell's *Principles of Electricity and Magnetism*, Morse and Feshbach's *Methods of Theoretical Physics*? Please, Dear, never accept a claim such as that one without investigating all relevant data and validated predictions.

In the case of the claim that the BoM is "the most correct of any book on earth..." the only support offered seems to be:

- 1) Native Americans exist and they must have come from somewhere – which are true enough, but don't support the contention that they're displaced Israelites,
- 2) The claim that "the Lord provided for eleven others to see the gold plates [on which the BoM was allegedly preserved]..." I'll get to these "testimonies" in the next

chapter; here, I'll state just that such testimonies demonstrate only that some people swear and have nothing whatsoever to do with the claim that the BoM is “**the most correct of any book on Earth...**” and

- 3) The claim that if you believe the BoM, then you'll “feel good” – which may be true, especially because the BoM later claims that if you do believe it, then you'll live forever, but if you don't, then you're headed for hell – but that says less about the “truth” of the BoM than about the ability of people to delude themselves.

In the last paragraph of the BoM's introduction, additional claims are made:

Those who gain this divine witness from the Holy Spirit [that is, those who believe that the BoM is “true”] **will also come to know by the same power** [what an astounding distortion of the concept of ‘knowing’!] **that Jesus Christ is the Savior of the world** [which I guess means that he'll prevent our destroying our world with pollution and weapons of mass destruction, he'll prevent the next big asteroid from hitting the Earth, he'll prevent the Sun from burning out, he'll prevent the approaching galaxy, Andromeda, from colliding with ours...], **that Joseph Smith is his revelator and prophet in these last days** [in spite of Joseph's track-record for making ridiculous prophecies, e.g., about when these “last days” were to end!], **and that the Church of Jesus Christ of Later-day Saints** [i.e., the group whose leaders are waiting in the wings with the collection plates, demanding 10% of your wealth] **is the Lord's kingdom** [Hello? The LDS Church is “the Lord's kingdom”? You mean “the Lord's kingdom” is a theocracy rather than a democracy? You mean “the Lord's kingdom” is governed by a bunch of dim-witted theocrats? Surely you jest!] **once again established on earth** [Hello? What's with the “once again”? Jesus never ruled anything? He couldn't even keep his “apostles” in line! Or do you mean as in the days of story-book character Moses (i.e., in reality, in the days of Ezra) who ruled the Jews with an iron fist, murdering dissidents? Or could you possibly mean as in the days of Muhammad, when he ruled by murdering his opponents? Or do you mean as in recent-day Afghanistan (when the Taliban ruled) and as in modern-day Iran (where the Mullah's rule)? Who in hell wants to live in a society in which religious fanatics rule?], **preparatory for the second coming of the Messiah.** [Hello? What craziness is this? According to the Gospel of Thomas, Jesus never said anything about coming again! That was a bunch of nonsense conceived by Zarathustra and then picked up by the clerics who fabricated the New Testament! According to the Gospel of Thomas (113), when his disciples asked him, “**When will the kingdom come?**”, Jesus answered: “**It will not come by watching for it. It will not be said, ‘Look, here!’ or ‘Look, there!’ Rather, the Father's kingdom is spread out upon the earth {now!}, and people don't see it.**”]

Sorry, Dear, such stupidity really gets to me. For contrast to this idiocy, Dear, if you would now like to experience “**the Father's kingdom**” – and even a certain grandfather's kingdom – then all you need do is go out and get some fresh air and exercise!