

John Wicklifje Rigdon, Edited by Karl Keller,  
"‘I NEVER KNEW A TIME WHEN I DID NOT  
KNOW JOSEPH SMITH’: A Son's Record of  
the Life and Testimony of Sidney Rigdon."  
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# *Dialogue:* A JOURNAL OF MORMON THOUGHT

## **"I NEVER KNEW A TIME WHEN I DID NOT KNOW JOSEPH SMITH":**

**A SON'S RECORD  
OF THE LIFE AND TESTIMONY  
OF SIDNEY RIGDON**

*Edited by Karl Keller*

*From time to time we plan to publish in DIALOGUE original documents or little-known writings that speak with a personal voice from the Mormon cultural heritage and historical experience. Karl Keller, who has edited the following manuscript lecture by Sidney Rigdon's son, is a frequent contributor to DIALOGUE and a member of the Board of Editors; he has recently taken a position as Assistant Professor of English at San Diego State College, has just published an article on Emerson in AMERICAN LITERATURE, and has a book on Emerson and an anthology of Mormon literature in preparation.*

Not very long after the death of Sidney Rigdon, the influential preacher and compatriote to Joseph Smith in the first years of the Church, his son, John Wickliffe Rigdon, wrote an apology for his father. He delivered it at Alfred University and other colleges and communities in the Central New York area around the turn of the century, in an attempt to revive interest in his almost entirely forgotten famous family and in an attempt to clear his father's name once and for all of criticisms connected with the founding of Mormonism.

The son, who moved in his last years to New York City after losing all his holdings in the oil refinery business and meeting with only small success as a lawyer, wrote the lecture obviously out of pride for his father. But he appears to have written it also as a way

of explaining his father to himself. His main emphasis in the lecture, as the reader will detect, is the great fame and fortune that Sidney Rigdon might have achieved had he been able to adapt his abilities and his personality fully to any one philosophy — Baptist, Campbellite, or Mormon. He sees his father as a tragic figure and is perhaps trying to account for the family's decline through an exploration of that tragedy. Yet the son's main point is that his father did much for the Church, and, though he was rejected by it and became bitter, he kept his faith — and that, to the son, transcends the tragedy. As an "outsider" he is obsessed with that transcendence.

The son is no great writer (it is difficult to see how he, with all his redundancy and verbiage and, to his New York listeners, minute detail, could have kept an audience's attention), yet the affection with which he remembers people and incidents and the effort at dramatizing events make his lecture worth reading. "I was there, I saw the makings of things, I watched a great man rise and fall," he seems to be saying. He senses well that through his father he has played a small and possibly significant role in history. He does not have much verve of language, yet his pride in his father's heroism and his efforts to understand his father's tragedy keep his narrative alive.

According to the few remaining relatives of the Rigdon family in the area of Friendship, New York, where Rigdon went with his family after the death of Joseph Smith, all of the other personal records written by Sidney Rigdon and his family have been destroyed. (A granddaughter and the only remaining descendant of Sidney Rigdon — a woman now residing in Florida and wishing to remain anonymous — reports that after returning to New York Rigdon wrote "novels and other books," but, she says, these have all been destroyed by the family.) And so these lecture notes of John Wickliffe Rigdon become the most intimate report of Rigdon extant. Yet the lecture has, as far as I can find, never been published or known widely outside of the quiet little town where he lived his last years and where he died in 1876.

Also in the late 1890's after he had rejoined the Church, the son took the time to write out these lecture notes in a longer form. He called his manuscript the "Life Story of Sidney Rigdon." That work was never published and is now in the Church Historian's Office in Salt Lake City. Although permission has never been granted anyone to publish or to quote extensively from that version,\* I have gained permission from President Joseph Fielding Smith to collate the text of the manuscript printed here with the one in the Historian's Office. They are very similar in form and approach, though the Salt Lake

manuscript has more detail and relates several additional events in the life of Sidney Rigdon.

In September, 1900, John W. Rigdon visited the First Presidency of the Church and offered to sell the "Life Story" of his father to the Church. It was purchased at that time but was never published, though I think the son assumed that the Church would print and distribute it. The style is the same as the manuscript printed here, but it is considerably less dramatic and more redundant, without being much more explicit. In expanding his narrative for the version that he gave the First Presidency, he has in some instances drawn at length upon sources already in print (for instance, some of Sidney Rigdon's sermons from Joseph Smith's *History* and from the *Times and Seasons* are included complete).

In the "Life Story" the son makes himself out to be much more favorable toward the Church than he does in this lecture. He makes no mention of the Spaulding Theory and does not call into question the authority of the Reorganized Church, as he does in the version printed here. And he makes his purpose more explicit; it is, he says, to correct "some of the erroneous beliefs that have heretofore been entertained of the character and purposes of Sidney Rigdon." The version printed here is altogether much more succinct and readable, however, than the "Life Story." I have referred in my footnotes to significant differences between the two manuscripts.

As long as John W. Rigdon's other "Life" remains under the protective custody of the Church Historian, the version printed here remains the only available primary source of the final testimony of Sidney Rigdon.

In editing the manuscript, I have regularized the spelling, punctuation, and grammar, and have made sentences and paragraphs out of the writer's sometimes incoherent notes, in order to facilitate reading. I have also added connecting words and articles where they are needed, but have noted all otherwise significant changes with brackets or in footnotes wherever there is likely to be controversy over the writer's intent. Yet I have left the manuscript intact so that the reader might sense the style for himself.

The lecture was written out in longhand in a rambling style that made informal delivery easy and additional commentary possible. The manuscript has yellowed slightly with time but is kept for anyone to see by a distant cousin of the author (again a relative who asked to remain anonymous) at her farm home near Cuba Lake where the Rigdon family once lived for a short time. I am indebted to Mrs. Sam Hess of Friendship, New York, for obtaining the manuscript for me to edit for publication in *Dialogue*.

In July, 1965, the town of Friendship, near where I lived at the time, held a Sesqui-Centennial commemoration and celebrated Sidney Rigdon as one of the town's most famous sons, even though few in the area had ever heard of the man and his influence on early Mormonism. Mrs. Hess, a Roman Catholic, was largely responsible for the revival of interest in Rigdon at the time. The site of the Rigdon-Robinson farm on Jackson Hill, the later Rigdon house on Main Street in Friendship, and the Rigdon family graves outside of town were made points of interest, largely through the influence of Mrs. Hess. It was during this commemoration that I first became acquainted with the Rigdon history in the area and became aware of the existence of this manuscript.

During this celebration, a commemorative service was conducted by President H. Lester Petersen of the Cumorah Mission and President H. H. Christensen of the Susquehanna District of the Church at the local Baptist church, a building that Rigdon was forbidden to enter all the days of his life in Friendship, New York. That event was symbolic; for Sidney Rigdon, if only in a small way, came thus into some of the fame that he so passionately desired. With the publication of this manuscript by his son, he perhaps comes into a little more.

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\* B. H. Roberts included two paragraphs from the last pages of the Salt Lake manuscript in a footnote in his *Comprehensive History of the Church* (I, 234-5) and again in a footnote in his edition of Joseph Smith's *History of the Church* (I, 122-3). Francis W. Kirkham, in *A New Witness for Christ in America* (I, 327-9), quoted the same section from the manuscript, and Daryl Chase made use of the son's facts and point of view in his unpublished thesis, "Sidney Rigdon, Early Mormon" (University of Chicago, 1931). Others have made passing reference to the son's account of the father's life and testimony. Otherwise the son's work has gone unpublished and unknown.

## THE LIFE AND TESTIMONY OF SIDNEY RIGDON

*John Wickliffe Rigdon*

I am the only living child of Sidney Rigdon, who died in the town of Friendship, Allegany County, New York, in the summer of 1876, and who was at the time of his death almost 83 years old. There were twelve children in my father's family; they are all dead except myself. Sidney Rigdon joined the Mormon Church in the year of 1830 at Kirtland, Ohio, and in the year 1833 was ordained Joseph Smith's first counselor, which position he retained up to the time of Joseph Smith's death at Carthage, Ill. (He was killed by a mob on the 27th day of June 1844.)

I never knew a time when I did not know Joseph Smith. I knew him from my earliest recollections up to the time of his assassination at Carthage in the State of Illinois. I was as familiar with him as I was with my own father. I used to see him almost every day of my life. My father and his family almost always lived very close to him. I used to see him every day and sometimes much oftener.

When my father and mother joined the Mormon Church at Kirtland, Ohio, he, my father, was living at a little town called Mentor in the State of Ohio about five miles from Kirtland. He was, at the time he joined the Mormon Church, preaching what was then Campbellitism, now called Christian, and soon after he joined the Mormon Church, he was charged with having written the Book of Mormon. He always denied the same to friend and foe alike, but they would not believe him. The world claimed that he stole one Solomon Spaulding's manuscript and from that concocted out of the said manuscript the Book of Mormon.<sup>1</sup> He used to tell them he never saw Spaulding's [manuscript] in his life, but the people of the world would not believe him and continued to assert that he did write the Book of Mormon and gave it to Joseph Smith to introduce to the world. The religions of the world were determined to prove, if they could, that the Book of Mormon was not obtained as Joseph Smith claimed (i.e., that an angel from heaven appeared to him and told him where to go and find that which was buried in a hill near Palmyra, N.Y.). The fact [is] that Joseph Smith had the book, all that knew him said he did not know enough to have written it, and somebody else must be found who they thought could have written it; for to admit that an angel appeared to Joseph Smith and told him where to go to find it was a reflection on their religion, and their religion must be maintained at all hazards, and therefore they selected Sidney Rigdon as the man.

Perhaps it might be well enough for me to tell you what kind of a man Sidney Rigdon was and then you will see why the world claimed he was the author of the book. Sidney Rigdon was born in the year of 1793 in Washington County, Pennsylvania.<sup>2</sup> His father, William Rigdon, was a farmer living on a farm ten miles from Pittsburg, being then a city of about 10,000 inhabitants. His father, William Rigdon, married a wife by the name of Nancy Gallaher. They had four children. Sidney Rigdon was the youngest. He had two brothers and one sister. His oldest brother, Carvel Rigdon, married and moved on a farm near to the old homestead. The second brother, Loami Rigdon, was a sickly boy and unable to work on the farm. His sister, Lucy Rigdon, married one Peter Boyer, who owned a farm near the old homestead, and moved with her husband to his farm, leaving Loami Rigdon and Sidney Rigdon on the old homestead with their father and mother.

It was the rule in the country that when a boy was too feeble to work on a farm, they would send him to school and give him an education. Loami Rigdon was too sickly and feeble to labor on a farm, and his parents decided to send him to school and give him an education. Sidney Rigdon wanted to

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<sup>1</sup> The reference is to *Manuscript Found*, an historical novel by Solomon Spaulding, an ex-preacher in Ohio and Pennsylvania. The theory that Spaulding's manuscript (recently discovered in the Oberlin College Library) was Joseph Smith's source for the Book of Mormon gained some currency between 1833 and 1900. It is a romance supposedly translated from twenty-four rolls of parchment covered with stories in Latin. The rolls were supposedly found in a cave on the banks of Conneaut Creek in Ohio. Written in modern English and about one-sixth the length of the Book of Mormon, Spaulding's story is the adventure narrative of some Romans blown off course to the American shore sometime before Christ. There is no resemblance whatever to the Book of Mormon. But to account for Joseph Smith's authorship, the theory was conceived that Sidney Rigdon somehow got the Spaulding novel into Joseph Smith's hands. John W. is defending his father against the alleged complicity of his father in the making of the Book of Mormon.

<sup>2</sup> Now Allegheny County.

go to school, and pleaded with his father and mother to let him go with his brother to school, but they would not consent to let him go, saying to him that he was able to work on the farm and he could not go. At last finding they would not let him go to school, he said to them in anger that he would have as good an education as his brother got and they could not prevent it. So his brother Loami was sent to school; he went to Lexington, Kentucky, and studied medicine and became a physician. He never returned to the old homestead to live but went to Hamilton in the State of Ohio and there practiced medicine for over forty years, leaving Sidney Rigdon and his father and mother on the farm to live.

Sidney Rigdon, after his brother Loami Rigdon had gone to Lexington, borrowed all the histories he could get and began to read them. His parents would not let him have a candle to read by night; he therefore gathered hickory bark (there was plenty of it around the old farm), and he used to get it and at night throw it on the old fireplace and then lie with his face and head towards the fire and read history till near morning unless his parents got up and drove him to bed before that time. In this way, he became a great historian, the best I ever saw. He seemed to have the history of the world on his tongue's end and he got to be a great biblical scholar as well. He was as familiar with the Bible as a child is with his spelling book. He was never known to play with the boys; reading books was the greatest pleasure he could get. He studied English grammar alone and became a very fine grammarian. He was very precise in his language.

At length his father, William Rigdon, died, leaving Sidney Rigdon and his mother alone on the farm. At length they got tired of living alone on the farm. It was lonesome and they sold the farm and his mother went to live with her daughter, Mrs. Peter Boyer, and Sidney Rigdon went to study theology under a Baptist minister by the name of Peters who belonged to what was called the straight Baptists.<sup>3</sup> (I do not know what straight Baptist means, unless it is those Baptists who believe in infant damnation, and that, it would seem to me, to be straight enough for almost anyone.) After getting his license to preach, he went to Pittsburg and preached a short time there and then went to the town of Warren, Trumbull County, in Ohio, and remained there about two years.<sup>4</sup> He did not have any particular charge of a church, but whenever a vacancy occurred in the country, he always filled it, and in that way got a reputation of being a very eloquent preacher.

Nature made him an orator and his great knowledge of history of the Bible gave him the knowledge so he was able to talk on almost any subject. He was of a natural religious turn of mind and he delighted in preaching the gospel.

At length he got married.<sup>5</sup> He married a daughter of Jeremiah Brooks, who was also a great Baptist. Soon after his marriage he and his wife started on their wedding tour to go to Pittsburg to visit his brother, his mother, and his sister, who resided ten miles from Pittsburg. They went on horseback; that is the way they rode in those days. They reached Pittsburg on Saturday night and stayed there overnight. One of the members of the Baptist church

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<sup>3</sup> A fundamentalist sect that referred to themselves as Regular Baptists.

<sup>4</sup> May 1819 to November 1821.

<sup>5</sup> June 12, 1820, to Phebe Brooks of Bridgetown, New Jersey.

who had heard my father preach came to see him and wanted to know if he would not come to the Baptist church and preach to them Sunday morning. He said they had one of the largest churches in the city of Pittsburg, but the church had become divided and they had no minister and had no preaching in the church, and he would be much pleased if he would come and preach to them Sunday morning. He told the brother he would. The brother gave notice that night that there would be preaching in the church.

The next morning quite a little congregation gathered at the church to hear him preach. After his discourse was ended and the congregation were dismissed, he told the congregation that he was going out into the country about ten miles from the city to visit his brother and mother and sister and should remain out there about four weeks, and if they wished him to come into the city and preach to them every Sunday morning during the time he remained out in the country, he would do so, as he could ride into the city every Sunday morning and preach to them and then go back in the afternoon. This offer they gladly accepted and my father preached in the church for four Sundays in succession. When he got ready to go home, he and his wife again came to Pittsburg and stayed overnight, and quite a number of the members of the church called to see them and wanted to know if he would not, when he got back home, come back and take charge of the church and be their pastor. They said to him that they had the largest congregation in Pittsburg when they were united and they thought from what they had heard of his preaching that he could unite them and they would be much pleased to have him come back and be their minister. He said to them that he would take the matter under advisement and when he got home he would consider the matter and let them know.

When he got home, he told his father-in-law of the offer the church at Pittsburg had made him, and he, being a great Baptist, urged him by all means to accept it, as it was not very often a young minister received such an offer. It might be the making of him and give him a great reputation. He therefore informed the members of the church at Pittsburg that he accepted their offer and would soon come to Pittsburg and become their pastor. Soon after informing them of his acceptance, he returned to Pittsburg with his wife and became the pastor of the Baptist church.<sup>6</sup> It was not long after he took charge of the church until he united the church, and he had the largest congregation in the city, and in less than one year he had the reputation of being one of the most eloquent preachers in the city. Everything went smoothly along; fame and fortune seemed to be within his grasp.

At length<sup>7</sup> an old Scotch divine came to Pittsburg and wanted to know of my father if he preached and taught the Baptist confession of faith [regarding] infant damnation. He told him that he did not, as he did not believe it and would not teach it. The Scotch divine replied to him that he would have to teach it, as it was part of the Baptist confession of faith. My father replied to him that he did not care if it was a part of the Baptist confession of faith. It was to him too horrible a doctrine for him to teach and he would have nothing to do with it. His refusal to teach the Baptist confession of faith occasioned quite a stir among the congregation. The older members of

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<sup>6</sup> In February 1822.

<sup>7</sup> August 1824.



the church thought he ought to teach it, as it was a part of their confession of faith, while the younger members thought he acted wisely in refusing to teach the doctrine. My father, seeing there was to be a division in the church, tendered his resignation and the church got another minister.

After resigning the pastorate of the Baptist church, he remained in Pittsburgh about two years.<sup>8</sup> After that [he worked] in a tan yard with his brother-in-law, Richard Brooks, who was a tanner and conyer [?] by trade who started a tannery in Pittsburgh. My father contributed some money to the business. At the end of two years they sold the tannery.

Soon after that Sidney Rigdon became acquainted with Alexander Campbell, who was a very learned man but not much of an orator.<sup>9</sup> He and Campbell got their heads together and started what was then called the Campbellite Church, now called Christian.<sup>10</sup> Sidney Rigdon baptized Campbell and Campbell baptized him, and the church was started. There was not much to their confession of faith. It was to believe on the Lord and Savior Jesus Christ, be baptized for the remission of your sins, and take the Bible for your guide was all there was of it. Its simplicity recommended itself to the general public, and Sidney Rigdon went to Mentor, Ohio, and commenced to preach the doctrine.<sup>11</sup> He soon had quite a large congregation.<sup>12</sup> They built him a church and he again seemed to be on the high road to fame and fortune.

One day the congregation asked him what he was going to charge them per year for his preaching. He said, nothing; he said the apostles asked nothing for their preaching and he was not a-going to charge anything. They said to

<sup>8</sup> 1824-26.

<sup>9</sup> 1788-1866. A native of Ireland, a Presbyterian and Baptist preacher, and the founder of the Disciples of Christ and the Churches of Christ, Campbell came from West Virginia to Pennsylvania and Ohio in the 1820's preaching Christian unity and a simple faith devoid of speculative theology and emotional revivalism.

<sup>10</sup> The Campbellites actually called themselves The Disciples of Christ, or The Church of Christ.

<sup>11</sup> Rigdon went first to Mantua, Ohio, to preach and later went to Mentor when a wealthy group of ruffled Baptists asked him to lead the congregation. "The doctrines which he advanced were new but were elucidated with such clearness and eloquence which was superior to what they had heard before that those whose prejudices were not too deeply rooted became his willing converts to the doctrines which he taught. . . . His reputation as a pulpit orator and deep reasoner had spread far and wide and he soon gained a popularity and an elevation which has fallen to the lot of but few men." (MS. "Life Story," pp. 15-16.)

<sup>12</sup> 1826. Andrew Jenson writes of him: "He devoted himself to the work of the ministry, confining himself to no special creed, but holding the Bible as his rule of faith and advocating repentance and baptism for the remission of sins and the gift of the Holy Ghost — doctrines which he and Alexander Campbell had been investigating. He labored in that vicinity [Bainbridge, Ohio] one year with much success, and built up a large and respectable church at Mantua, Portage County, Ohio. His doctrines were new, and crowded houses assembled to hear him, though some opposed and ridiculed his doctrines. He was then pressingly invited to remove to Mentor, an enterprising town, about thirty miles from Bainbridge, and near Lake Erie, which he did soon afterwards. At this place there were remnants of a Baptist church, the members of which became interested in his doctrines. But many of the citizens were jealous of him, and slanderous reports were circulated concerning him. By continuing his labors, however, the opposition weakened, prejudice gave way and he became very popular. Calls came from every direction for him to preach, and his fame increased and spread abroad. Both rich and poor crowded his churches. Many became convinced and were baptized, whole churches became converted and he soon had large and flourishing societies throughout that region." — *Latter-day Saint Biographical Encyclopedia* (Salt Lake City, 1901), pp. 31-2.

him in reply that he had been giving them the gospel and now they were a-going to give him something. They bought him a little farm coming right up to the edge of the village and built him a house.

It was almost ready for him to move into when along came Parley Pratt, Oliver Cowdery, and one Ziba Peterson with the Book of Mormon.<sup>13</sup> It was a bound volume and it was the first time Sidney Rigdon ever saw it or ever heard of the man called Joseph Smith.<sup>14</sup> Parley Pratt presented the book to my father in the presence of my mother and my oldest sister, Athalia Rigdon Robinson, who was a young girl of ten years of age. Parley Pratt used to be a Baptist minister and was somewhat acquainted with Sidney Rigdon.

In presenting the Book of Mormon, he said, "Brother Rigdon, here is a book which is a revelation from God. One Joseph Smith, a young boy, had an angel appear to him who told him where to go to find the plates upon which the book was engraved. They were gold plates. Joseph Smith went as directed by the angel and found the plates in a hill near Palmyra, N. Y., and brought them to his home and there by the power of God translated them, and it was the everlasting gospel given to the children of men."

My sister and mother told me that my father replied to Parley Pratt, "You need not argue the case with me. I have one bible which I claim to have some knowledge [of] and which I believe to be a revelation of God. But as to this book, I have some doubts, but you can leave it with me when you go away in the morning and I will read it, and when you come again I will tell you what I think about it."

Pratt said he would do it. "But," said he, "will you let us preach in your church tonight?" My father hesitated for a moment and finally said it would probably do no harm and they might preach in the church if they wished to do so.

Quite a little congregation gathered at the church to hear the strangers preach their strange doctrines about an angel appearing to a young boy who told him where to go to find a book engraved upon gold plates hid up in a hill near Palmyra, N. Y., which had the everlasting gospel to preach to the children of men engraved upon it. Oliver Cowdery and Parley Pratt preached. Peterson did not say anything. Pratt spoke last. At the conclusion of his remarks, Pratt asked my father if he had any remarks to make. If so he should be pleased to hear him.

Sidney Rigdon arose and said, "Brethren, we have listened to strange doctrines tonight but we are commanded to prove all things and to hold fast to that which is good. I would caution you not to be too hasty in giving your opinion upon what you have heard, but give this matter your careful consideration and then you will be better prepared to tell whether it is true or not."

The meeting was dismissed and Cowdery, Pratt, and Peterson went home with my father and stayed over night. And in the morning when they went

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<sup>13</sup> In the fall of 1830, Joseph Smith asked Oliver Cowdery, Ziba Peterson, Orson Pratt, and Parley P. Pratt to preach the gospel as missionaries. They proselytized in Buffalo and among the Catteraugus Indians and then found their way into Ohio. Parley P. Pratt had lived in Ohio previous to 1830, had been a missionary for Alexander Campbell there, and had been acquainted with Sidney Rigdon. Pratt led the other missionaries into Ohio because he was convinced that many of the Campbellites would accept the same ideas he had come to believe in. The first place they stopped at was the home of the Rigdons. (In his "Life Story," Rigdon says that Peter Whitmer was with them.)

<sup>14</sup> Again, John W. is trying to defend his father against the "Spaulding theory."

away, they left him the Book of Mormon, telling him that they were going to the town of Kirtland about five miles from there and would be back in about two or three weeks.

My father, immediately after the strangers had gone away, commenced to read the book. He got so engaged in it that it was hard for him to quit long enough to eat his meals. He read it both day and night. At last he had read it through and pondered and thought over it.

At length Pratt and his two companions got back. My father asked them who this Joseph Smith was and how much education he had. They said he was a man about 22 years old and had hardly a common school education.<sup>15</sup> My father replied if that was all the education he had, he never wrote the book. Pratt told my father that they had converted some people at Kirtland while they were gone and were a-going to baptize some of them the coming week and would be pleased to have him and his wife come down and see them at the time that the baptism took place. My father promised that they would and did so, and while there and before they left for Mentor, they were both baptized into the Mormon Church.<sup>16</sup>

When they got back and his congregation heard of what he had done, they were furious at him and said to him that if he had remained a Campbellite and continued to preach the gospel which he had helped to create, he might [have] gone down to the grave as one of the great divines of the age, but now he had gone and thrown it all away and was a-going to follow a fool of a boy who claimed an angel had appeared to him and told him where to go to find some plates of gold upon which there was engraved the Book of Mormon, which was to be the foundation of the Mormon Church. It was nonsense and a man of his knowledge ought to have known better than to have had anything to do with such impostures. He ought not to have let them preach in their church, should not have let them stay overnight in his house, and should have refused to have anything to do with them. My father replied to them that they could talk to him as they pleased [but] he was convinced in reading the Book of Mormon that the doctrine preached by the Mormons was true and he was a-going to preach the doctrine, let the consequences be what they may.

He was not permitted to move into the little house which they finished for him to live in, and the Campbellite Church refused to have anything more to do with him. Therefore, he took his family and his little belongings and went to a little town called Hiram, about two and a half miles from Kirtland, and then lived with those people who had been baptized by Parley Pratt and his associates at Kirtland.<sup>17</sup>

<sup>15</sup> In the "Life Story" John W. Rigdon adds that while "reading the Book of Mormon and praying to the Lord for light and meditating upon the things he had read, after some few weeks from the time he received the book he became fully convinced of the truth of the work and was satisfied that it was a revelation from God." (p. 22.)

<sup>16</sup> November 14, 1830.

<sup>17</sup> In his *Brief History of the Church of Christ of Latter Day Saints* . . . (St. Louis, 1839), John Corryll writes of these incidents: "I shortly heard that these messengers had stopped in Kirtland, about thirty miles distant, among a society of people called Campbellites, at whose head stood Elder Sidney Rigdon, a noted preacher of that order. With this news I was at first much pleased; for, from my former acquaintances with that society, I knew that they were well versed in the scriptures, and I supposed that, without fail, they would con-

When he had got there with his family, they wished him to go to Palmyra to see Joseph Smith, and he went and saw Joseph at that time,<sup>18</sup> being the first time he ever had seen or met him, and he never saw the Book of Mormon until Parley Pratt presented it to him at Mentor, Ohio. He did not see the plates from which Joseph Smith translated the Book of Mormon, but he talked with him and also the witnesses who saw the plates and helped to write the book as translated by Joseph Smith from the plates. After spending a few days with Joseph Smith, he came back to Hiram firmly convinced that he had found the everlasting gospel to preach to the children of men.<sup>19</sup> In 1833 he was ordained to be Joseph Smith's first counselor, which position he held up to the time that Joseph was killed at Carthage, Ill., in the month of June 1844.<sup>20</sup>

Not long after he had moved to Hiram, Ohio, Joseph Smith and Sidney Rigdon were taken out of bed one morning before daylight and tarred and feathered by a mob. The mob came and got Rigdon first. He was a man weighing about 225. They dragged him some distance over the frozen ground

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found the impostors, convince them of their folly, and send them home again. But, to my astonishment, in a short time I heard that they had converted a majority of the society, together with Elder Rigdon, to their faith. What does this mean, thought I. Are Elder Rigdon and these men such fools as to be duped by those impostors? I became much excited in my feelings; for in that society were several men for whom I had formed the most favorable opinion, and for whom I felt the greatest veneration and respect. By the advice of a neighbor whose feelings were similar to mine, I concluded to pay them a visit, with a determination, if I could, to persuade Elder Rigdon to go home with me, on a preaching visit; for I thought, if I could get him away from them until his mind became settled, he might be saved from their imposition. But before I arrived at his residence, I heard that he had embraced their faith, and had been baptized by them. On receiving this news, my feelings became much embittered, and I felt more and more determined in my opposition. . . . I was invited to see Elder Rigdon. I requested to converse with him on the subject of his new religion. He observed to me that he was now beyond the land of contention, and had got into the land of peace." (pp. 16-18.)

<sup>18</sup> This was in December of 1830.

<sup>19</sup> Between 1830 and 1833, there are significant events in Rigdon's life which the son does not mention. In 1831 he became a kind of literary secretary and editor to Joseph Smith, assisting him in transcribing his translation of the Bible and other theonomous works. A revelation of Joseph Smith's commanded Rigdon to "watch over him [Joseph Smith] that his faith fail not. . . . and . . . write for him; and the scriptures shall be given. . . . Tarry with him, and he shall journey with you; forsake him not, and surely these things shall be fulfilled. . . . 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." (Doctrine and Covenants 35:19-24.) In January 1831 he assisted the removal of Joseph Smith and his family, with others, to Kirtland, and in September to Hiram, Ohio. After ordination as a High Priest in the Church, he wrote articles and letters for the members of the Church and preached prolifically. However, some of his writings were not found "acceptable to the Lord" (Doctrine and Covenants 63:56) because he was too "proud" to receive counsel about them. During these years, Rigdon had several visions with Joseph Smith which the son does not feel it important enough to mention in his account of his father. In one of these he saw God the Father and Jesus Christ and saw into the realms of the universe. Rigdon also assisted Joseph Smith in organizing an adult education program for male members of the Church, The School of the Prophets, and went on a preaching mission with him to Canada.

<sup>20</sup> A revelation of Joseph Smith's on March 8 commanded as much: "And again, verily I say unto thy brethren, Sidney Rigdon and Frederick G. Williams, their sins are forgiven them also, and they are accounted as equal with thee in holding the keys of this last kingdom." (Doctrine and Covenants 90:6.) As his son emphasizes, Rigdon never forgot the promise of equal status with Joseph Smith.

by his heels, bumping the back of his head, so that when they got him to the place where they were to put the tar and feathers on him, he was insensible. They covered him with tar and feathers and pounded him till they thought he was dead and then went to get Joseph Smith. He found them,<sup>21</sup> but they got hold of him at last and carried him out, and they took him where Rigdon lay, and Joseph thought he was dead. The mob covered him with tar and feathers and pounded him till they got tired and left them both on the ground. Soon after the mob left, Joseph Smith got up and went home, not very badly hurt. He was bruised some about the head. My father must have lain on the ground for some time where the mob left him. At last he got up in a dazed condition and did not know where he was nor where to go, but at last he got his face turned toward his home, more by accident than design, and went reeling along the road not knowing where he was; he would have passed his house but my mother was out the door watching for him and went out as he came along and got him in the house. She got the tar and feathers off from him as best she could and got him to bed. In the morning Joseph Smith came over to see him, but he was crazy. He wanted him to get him his razor. Joseph Smith wanted to know what he wanted it for. He said that he wanted to kill his wife. Joseph Smith soothed him as best he could and left him. In a few days my father regained his mind.

Soon after getting over the effects of the tar and feathers, they took their horses and started for Jackson County, Missouri, a distance of about 1000 miles.<sup>22</sup> They laid out the town of Independence in Jackson County and selected a site for a temple and came home. They left a few Mormons in Independence, Missouri. Among the number was W. W. Phelps. He was publishing a little paper at Independence which was published once a month.<sup>23</sup>

But the few members of the church at Independence got to quarrelling with the Missourians and they drove them out of Jackson County and they went into Clay County, and there they got into trouble again with the Missourians.<sup>24</sup> Philo Dibble was shot. Dibble told me he was shooting at the Missouri mob and went to load his gun after shooting at them but found that the end of his powder horn had been shot off and powder spilled. He saw a hole through his coat and unbuttoning it found a hole through the vest. He did not examine any farther since he then was in no pain. He remained there looking at the boys shooting at the Missouri mob for nearly an hour. At last pain came on and he was in dreadful agony. After the fight was over he was attended by his brethren and got well and lived to be about 83 years of age and was buried at Salt Lake, and the ball that wounded him in the fight in Clay County, Missouri, remained in the body when it was carried to his grave.

The Missouri mob drove the few saints from Clay County, but told them if they would go into Caldwell County, Missouri, they might stay there. They would not be disturbed. So they moved into Caldwell County and founded the town of Far West. Joseph Smith and Rigdon, after returning again to Ohio, concluded that as the Missouri mob was acting so badly, they would make the gathering place Kirtland, Ohio, about two and a half miles from

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<sup>21</sup> That is, eluded them.

<sup>22</sup> This was in April and May of 1832.

<sup>23</sup> The official Church periodical, *The Evening and Morning Star*.

<sup>24</sup> April to July 1832.

Hiram. They accordingly moved their families to Kirtland.<sup>25</sup> There was where my first recollections began.

There they began the erection of a temple. I remember well while they were building the temple. It was finished in 1836 and was dedicated. Sidney Rigdon preached the sermon.<sup>26</sup> How the Mormons succeeded in building the temple I could never understand. They had no money but somehow contrived to get the lumber. And the members of the church worked from early morning till ten or twelve at night. Some got board, some didn't, so at the end of three years it was finished and was one of the largest houses then in the State of Ohio.

On the day when the temple was to be dedicated, there was a great time of rejoicing by the members of the Church.<sup>27</sup> They could not all get into church the first day, so the ceremony was continued on a second day. My father preached the sermon on the first day. He took for his text Psalm 8 of the Savior:<sup>28</sup> Foxes have holes and the birds have nests, but the Son of Man has no place to lay his head. He said that this was the first temple that had ever been erected and dedicated to the service of the living God in modern times that he had any knowledge of. This sermon was said to be one of the great efforts of his life.<sup>29</sup>

What glorious times the Saints had when the temple was dedicated and what shouts of Hosannah have I heard from the old temple while the Mormons were permitted to worship God within its walls! The people came to church every Sunday because they wanted to come. You could not keep them away. A great many strangers came to hear the Mormons preach. My father usually preached on Sunday morning and great crowds, both members and strangers, came to hear him.

The upper story of the temple was used for schools. I went to school the last year we remained at Kirtland. Elias Smith, who was probate judge of Salt Lake in 1863, was my teacher.

It seemed, however, that Mormons were not permitted to remain at Kirtland a great length of time after completion of the temple. In less than two years from its completion Joseph Smith and Sidney Rigdon were forced to leave Kirtland on account of their starting of the Kirtland Bank.<sup>30</sup> My father

<sup>25</sup> Joseph Smith wrote of Rigdon at about this time: "Brother Sidney is a man whom I love, but he is not capable of that pure and steadfast love for those who are his benefactors, as should possess the breast of a president of the Church of Christ. This, with some other little things, such as selfishness and independence of mind, which, too often manifested, destroy the confidence of those who would lay down their lives for him. But, notwithstanding these things, he is a very great and good man — a man of great power of words, and can gain the friendship of his hearers very quickly. He is a man whom God will uphold, if he will continue to his calling." —Jenson, p. 33.

<sup>26</sup> The manuscript has a marginal note: "Did Rigdon dedicate the temple?" He didn't.

<sup>27</sup> March 27, 1836.

<sup>28</sup> St. Matthew, chapter 8.

<sup>29</sup> Joseph Smith said of the sermon: "He spoke two hours and a half in his usual logical manner. His prayer and address were very forcible and sublime, and well adapted to the occasion. At one time, in the course of his remarks, he was rather pathetic [i.e., emotional], and drew tears from many eyes." —*History of the Church* (Salt Lake City, 1948), II, 414.

<sup>30</sup> The Kirtland Safety Society Bank, founded in 1836 to assist members of the Church (especially emigrants from Europe) in financing the purchase of property around Kirtland. It failed largely because of the national financial panic of 1837 and the resulting depression,

opposed it. He said it would not be legal as they had no charter. He did not wish to have anything to do with it, but Joseph Smith thought differently and persuaded Father to sign bills as president and Joseph signed them as cashier. They gave their notes for the silver needed to start the bank. It ran but a short time as they could not get the silver to redeem the bills; the bills came back to the bank faster than silver could be gotten to redeem them with. And the bank went down.<sup>81</sup>

The notes which they had given to get hard money to redeem the bills came due. One Warren Parrish, who used to be a good Mormon and who got notes in his possession and had apostatized from Mormonism, got angry with Joseph for some reason unknown to me and told Joseph that he had notes which Joseph and Sidney had given upon which they had borrowed money to start the bank with. And they were about due. And if the notes were not paid at maturity, he would sue them and get judgment against Joseph and Sidney, and if judgment was not paid, he would put them in jail where they would stay until judgment was paid. There was a law in the State of Ohio to the effect that if one got a judgment on a debt against another and it was not paid, he could be thrown into jail and remain there until he paid it. As they could not pay judgment, all they could do was to get out of the state.<sup>82</sup>

Therefore, in the winter of 1837, they and their families started for Caldwell County, Missouri, a distance of about 1000 miles. I was attending school in the upper part of the temple when we left. On coming home from school one day in the afternoon of the day we left, I saw considerable commotion about my father's house. I inquired of Mother what was the reason. She said, nothing that concerned me. In the evening I saw several men come to our house and whisper a time and go away. I wanted to know of Mother what was the trouble, but could get no reply; and was at last ordered to bed. And I and my brother Sidney went to bed.

Along in the night, I was awakened by a man trying a pair of shoes on my feet. I asked what he was doing. He said he had gotten me a new pair of shoes. I said that was all right, but had he not better wait till morning, then I could try them on better. He said, "You go to sleep and don't ask questions." I did so. Not long after that, my brother and I were awakened and told to dress as we were going away. I asked where we were going, and he said to a land flowing with milk and honey that I had heard talked so much about. Well, I thought, if I was going to that land which was flowing

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but also because of the extravagant borrowing of the Church members in 1836 and 1837. An additional burden upon the finances of the Church was the thousands of members being sent to Kirtland for financial help by outlying branches of the Church. B. H. Roberts, *Comprehensive History of the Church* (Salt Lake City, 1930), I, 397-400.

<sup>81</sup> The Ohio State Legislature refused to grant a charter to a group it had not yet recognized as an institutionalized church. Having no legal status, the Society therefore changed its name to The Kirtland Safety Society Anti-Banking Company, a Stock Industrial Company, to suggest that it was a private concern. But Oliver Cowdery had already had notes printed with the earlier name on them, and the Church leaders made the mistake of using them, therefore appearing to work under the guise of an unapproved name. The lack of a state charter forced the creditors in New York, Pittsburgh, and Cleveland to refuse payment, and the business activity financed by the Society failed disastrously. Roberts, I, 401-3.

<sup>82</sup> Rigdon and Smith were arrested for violating the banking laws of the state and fined \$1000 each. The case was appealed before the Geauga County Court but threats on the lives of both forced them to leave the state before the case was heard. Roberts, I, 403.

with milk and honey, it was a pretty good place for me to go. And I wanted to go. That night about twelve o'clock we started in our open lumber wagon, leaving my brother-in-law, George W. Robinson, behind to sell some property and get two spans of horses, a carriage, and another lumber wagon and meet us at Dublin in the State of Indiana, where we were to wait for him to come up.

We rode all night in the lumber wagon, which we left Kirtland in. Joseph Smith met us with all his family just as we were leaving the village of Kirtland. We stopped the next morning a little after daylight to get breakfast at a hotel and from there went to Akron, Ohio. A short distance from there we stopped at a friend's house and stayed some two days in order to put covers on the wagons so we would be warmer. Then we again started for Dublin, Indiana, and reached there without accident. There we waited three weeks<sup>83</sup> for Robinson to come up. When we came to Dublin, we all started for Far West, Caldwell County, Missouri.

We travelled together for a while and then separated, as it was difficult for us to get accommodations travelling together. Joseph Smith took one half of the party, my father the other. We agreed to meet in Indiana and we did meet there,<sup>84</sup> and then separated again. Joseph Smith was to cross the Mississippi River at Scunedy and we were to cross the Mississippi at Louisiana, twenty miles below.<sup>85</sup>

We left Joseph Smith in Indiana and got along all right till we got to a town called Paris, Illinois, where we stayed overnight. In the morning there was a great snowstorm. It would be called a blizzard now. We had prairie to cross of about ten miles and were cautioned not to attempt to cross it in such a storm. The people said the road was filled up with snow and we would be liable to get lost and, if we did, be frozen to death. But my father thought differently and thought we could get across without trouble. We could see woods on the other side and we started, but we had not been out but a short time when the storm was so great that we could not see across the prairie, and there was no road to be seen. Robinson took the lead and a man by the name of Darrow followed him in an open wagon. I and my brother were in the third wagon. We had lost sight of Robinson and Darrow when one of the four wheels of the wagon I was in came off and let us down in the snow. While trying to fix the wheel on, a man came up and told us to turn back; if we did not we would freeze to death. So I was put in another wagon and we turned around and made our way back to Paris. When we got there inquiries were made where Robinson and Darrow were. It seemed they did not hear the order to turn back. Robinson had in his covered carriage his wife and my mother and my father's mother, who was about 80 years old. I was so nearly frozen to death I could not walk. I had to be carried into the house and there thawed out. But it was getting dark and the storm was at its height and none dared venture out on the prairie in the storm, and Robinson and the women and Darrow had to be left to their fate. There was great excitement that night in house where we stayed.

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<sup>83</sup> Joseph Smith reports that the stay was for only nine days. *History*, III, 2.

<sup>84</sup> At Terre Haute.

<sup>85</sup> These are two points on the Mississippi River not far below Quincy, Illinois, and Hannibal, Missouri.



In the morning the storm was over but it was very cold, but the excitement was so great that we had to start and see if we could find the lost ones. We could see across the prairie but there was no road to be seen. We started, and after about two and a half hours we got across to the timber on the other side. There was a little house standing on the bank of a small stream and we went to inquire if any wagons had come there the day before. We were overjoyed to learn that an open wagon and carriage had stopped to get warm but they had no accommodations to keep them overnight. They had gone to a house about five miles from there and would probably find them. We made haste to the house, and when we got there we found them well, except Darrow, whose sons were badly frozen.

We stayed there that night and in the morning, we all started again. We got out on the prairie in Illinois. Then there was sickness and we had to stop and remained there for three weeks, and it was the happiest three weeks I ever spent. The man whom we stopped with had drawn up a large crop of corn in the shack near his house, and, the snow being deep, the prairie chickens came in large flocks every morning and remained all day. It was said that hunger will tame lions and so it will prairie chickens.

After three weeks the weather moderated and the road became passable and the folks who were sick were well enough to travel. We started again for the Mississippi River. We got opposite Louisiana just two days before the rains had come and the ice on the river had become too weak to cross it with teams or foot. So we had to remain there ten days to wait for the ice to get out before a steam ferry boat could come over to take us across. When we got on the Missouri River, we found that the mud had got very deep and it was hard to travel with loaded wagons. After we had got within 125 miles, our horses were tired out and we got to a Mr. Herrick's house and there stayed two weeks waiting for our horses to get rested and for the mud to dry up, and then started again, and this time we reached the long-looked-for promised land one bright morning in the month of April, 1838.

Joseph Smith heard of us the night before, he having reached Far West about three weeks before we got there, and was much pleased to learn that we would reach Far West the next morning and was on the lookout for us. He met us just as we were coming up into the village. He shook hands with my father and my mother with tears in his eyes and thanked God that we had got to the journey's end. Joseph Smith led us to Thomas Marsh, who was then the President of the Quorum of the Twelve. This was on Saturday. On Sunday they were going to have a meeting and Sidney Rigdon was to preach.

All the Mormons in Far West came to hear him. There was a large schoolhouse outside the village where the meeting was to be held. There was no standing room. They took out the windows, the weather being warm, and got up into the window spaces. Some had to remain outside. He preached for two hours. It was one of his great efforts.

All things continued till the Fourth of July celebration. The village of Far West was built around a square. In the center they had dug a cellar for a temple. The cornerstone was laid on the Fourth of July. My father was to deliver the oration. Colonel Hinckle had one company of uniformed militia. We had a martial band with a bass drum and two small drums, and so a procession was formed to march, the uniform company of militia coming first and then the procession followed. We made quite a showing for a small

town. After marching around the square, the militia came to the cellar and halted. There was erected a stand to speak from. Joseph Smith, Hyrum Smith, Sidney Rigdon, and several others took their places.

When a benediction had been given, Sidney Rigdon commenced his oration. The first half of his oration was a Fourth of July oration pure and simple. Not a word was said that could offend the ear of anyone. The next half was devoted to the building that was to be erected. The lower floor was to be devoted for worship. The upper story was to be for school. They were to be so arranged so that they could give any student who might come a college education if he wished it. But in closing up his remarks he made use of this language: "We have provided the world with kindness and have grown weary with well-doing, and if the Missourians shall attack us again, we shall carry the war to these very doors."<sup>86</sup> In my opinion this should not have been said. It only excited the minds of Missourians. It was reprinted that he had threatened to commence a war of extermination against the Missourians, but the little breeze that this remark occasioned soon wore off and all seemed to be well.

In the fall of the year<sup>87</sup> there was a man who was running for Congress and he wanted the Mormons to vote for him.<sup>88</sup> There were a few of the Mormons who were legal voters and they went to the polls to vote. When they got there they found the Missourians outnumbered them nearly two to one.<sup>89</sup> The Missourians said they were not voters and should not vote. The Mormons said they were voters and should vote, and they got into a fight. The Mormons punched the heads of the Missourians quite badly,<sup>90</sup> and the Missourians ran for their guns, and the Mormon voters voted and returned home.<sup>91</sup> That commenced the fight and it never ended till the Mormons were driven from the State of Missouri.

Soon after that we began to hear of the Missourians driving some of the Mormons from their farms and stealing and driving off stock and insulting their wives and daughters, and they [were] obliged to send their families into town for protection. Soon it got so bad that the Mormons began to retaliate and send out men and drive the Missourians off and compel them to let the

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<sup>86</sup> In its entirety, this part of Rigdon's talk sounds more like a declaration of war: "From this day and this hour," he said, "we will suffer [persecutions and violence] no more. We take God and all the holy angels to witness this day that we warn all men in the name of Jesus Christ to come on us no more forever, for from this hour we will bear it no more. Our rights shall no more be trampled on with impunity. The men or the set of men who attempts it does it at the expense of their lives. And that mob that comes on us to disturb us, it shall be between us and them a war of extermination, for we will follow them till the last drop of their blood is spilled, or else they will have to exterminate us, for we will carry the seat of war to their own houses and to their own families, and one party or the other shall be utterly destroyed." (From James H. Hunt, *Mormonism* (St. Louis, 1844), pp. 167-180.)

<sup>87</sup> This incident took place August 6, 1836.

<sup>88</sup> Probably W. P. Peniston, a candidate for the state legislature from Daviess County, who knew that the members of the Church would not vote for him because of his part in removing them from Clay County, and so he set out to prevent Mormons and Negroes in the area from voting at all.

<sup>89</sup> Joseph Smith says ten to one. *History*, III, 57.

<sup>90</sup> Joseph Smith reports that the Missourians started the fight. *History*, III, 57.

<sup>91</sup> Joseph Smith writes that "Very few of the brethren voted." *History*, III, 58.

Mormons alone. They often got into a fight with them, and wherever they did the Missourians always ran. Things kept getting worse all the time.

David Patten, who used to be called by the Mormons as Captain Fear-Not, was rightly named, for if there was ever a brave man he was one. One night late in the fall he heard that a gang of Missourians under General Lucas that had been robbing some of the Mormons were in camp on what was called Cracker River, a distance from Far West of about 25 miles. He got up a company of Mormons and went after them. I was out of the square when they started. Patten did not know where on the river he could find them. On his way out he ran across a young man about eighteen years old by the name of Patrick O'Banion who knew where he could find them, and he compelled O'Banion to go with them and show them the way. When he got in the vicinity the Mormons hitched their horses in a grove of trees nearby and prepared to make attack on foot. When they got into an opening on the bank of the river, one of the Missouri sentinels called out, "Who comes there," and without waiting for a reply, quite a number of Missourians fired into the Mormons. David Patten fell, shot through the body, and Patrick O'Banion, who stood beside him, fell also, shot in the back, and one Gideon Carter, who was farther back, fell, shot through the neck.

Then the Missourians ran and crossed the river and formed their company on the other side. There not being much water in the river at that time, they all commenced a hasty retreat. They left all of their horses and camp equipment and started to climb up a steep bank when the Mormons fired a volley into them. One of their number came tumbling down the bank, shot in the back dead. The rest got away. Then Patten was shot. He said, "Boys go ahead; never mind me."

The Mormons crossed the river and took their horse blankets and what guns they could find and the clothing they left behind, and took up the bodies of Patten and O'Banion and started for Far West. [They] did not know that Carter had been shot as it was dark. They got a few miles way, when the pains of Patten were so bad they had to stop to the house of a friend and leave him, and they sent for his wife. She got there just before he died. When she came into the house, he told her he was a-going to die but whatever she did, not to deny the fact. In less than an hour he was dead. They brought young Patrick O'Banion to my father's house where he lingered in great agony for two days and then died. He was not a Mormon, nor was his father or mother. They came and took the body away. The next day they brought David Patten's body, and also that of Gideon Carter, to Far West, whom they found lying dead on the field. He was shot through the neck and the Mormons did not know he was hurt till the next morning after Patten's death. I was at Patten's house when his body was brought there. I looked into the wagon box and there lay David Patten's body silent in death; he lay on his back, his lips tightly closed and no indication of fear on his countenance. He was a brave man and we all deeply mourned his loss.

The next day we buried both David Patten and Gideon Carter in military order. Joseph Smith and Hyrum Smith and Sidney Rigdon rode at the head of the procession on horseback. Then came the martial band and after that the bodies of David Patten and Gideon Carter and then quite a little procession followed. After, we took them out to a little burying ground just outside of the village and there we buried them.

A very short time after that <sup>42</sup> came that horrible massacre at Hauns Mill, about 25 miles from Far West. One afternoon a band of Missourians rode into a little grove just outside of the settlement at Hauns Mill, hitched their horses, and then came out of the woods with their guns and shot every man they could find. The people at Hauns Mill were not thinking that anyone would attack them. The men were out in the fields to work, not being armed. There was not even a suspicion of any harm being done them. They were taken by surprise as the Missourians began to shoot them. Then they ran for their houses to get their guns in order to defend themselves and were almost all shot down and killed before they reached their houses. The Missourians killed fifteen men and one little baby and shot his little brother in the hip, but he got well.

A man by the name of Smith who was a blacksmith had a shop at the settlement and had two little boys. He took the boys and put them under the bellows and then took his gun and went out to see what could be done to defend the people. While out of the shop he got his death wound and came back to his shop and lay down near where his boys were hiding and died. While Smith lay there dead, two of the mob came into the shop and seeing Smith dead and seeing the boys, one of them put the muzzle of his gun against the head of one of the boys and fired, blowing the top of his head off, and his brains were blown over the head of his brother. The other ruffian shot the other little boy in the hip and then went away.

After they had shot every man they could find, they mounted their horses and rode away, as if the devils were after them. The Mormons were digging a well for drinking water at Hauns Mill but had not got it deep enough. The women took the fifteen men that were killed and the little boy and carried them to the well, put them in, and covered them up and left them.<sup>43</sup>

After getting their goods the best they could, they came to Far West. The town was crowded with farmers and their families who had been driven from their farms. Room was found for all but there was little to eat and they were reduced to eating parched corn.

Not long after the massacre at Hauns Mill, Governor Boggs of the State of Missouri ordered out the militia to the number of 10,000 with orders to go to Far West and exterminate the Mormons or drive them from the state.<sup>44</sup> In that number there was a brigade commanded by General [Alexander W.]

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<sup>42</sup> This is October 30, 1838.

<sup>43</sup> In his account, Joseph Smith adds, "The number killed and mortally wounded in this wanton slaughter was eighteen or nineteen. . . . To finish their work of destruction, this band of murderers, composed of men from Daviess, Livingston, Ray, Carroll, and Chariton counties, led by some of the principal men of that section of the upper country . . . proceeded to rob the houses, wagons, and tents of bedding and clothing; drove off horses and wagons, leaving widows and orphans destitute of the necessities of life; and even stripped the clothing from the bodies of the slain. According to their own account, they fired seven rounds in this awful butchery, making upwards of sixteen hundred shots at a little company of men, about thirty in number." *History of the Church*, III, 185-6.

<sup>44</sup> "I have received . . . information of the most appalling nature," Governor L. W. Boggs wrote in his military order of October 27, 1838, "which places the Mormons in the attitude of an open and avowed defiance of the laws. . . . The Mormons must be treated as enemies, and must be exterminated, or driven from the State if necessary for public peace." *Murder of an American Prophet*, ed. Keith Huntress (San Francisco, 1960), pp. 59-60.

Doniphan over whom General Lucas was commander. The said militia had not authority.<sup>46</sup>

Along in the afternoon late in the fall of 1838,<sup>46</sup> a large number of persons came riding into town telling us that a multitude was coming for the purpose of massacring us, and in a short time after we got the news, we saw them coming over the hills and coming down onto what was called Goose Creek. When they got on the banks of the creek they turned to the left and went in a large grove. All was great excitement in Far West. The women were greatly excited and the men showed great fear as to what might happen.

The first time I saw Joseph Smith<sup>47</sup> was in front of Father's house (the house fronted the square on which the cellar for the temple was dug). He was loading a gun and was surrounded by about forty or fifty men who appeared badly frightened, and well they might be. Joseph told them to go and get their guns and he would lead them down as near as possible to the camp of the Missourians and see what they intended to do. "Perhaps," he said, "they may be intending to attack us in the night." He wanted them to know that if [they were] going to wait till morning, they would not get hurt by doing down with him.

They got their guns and started down. I, with several other boys, went along, as we were anxious to see what was to be done. Joseph took the lead and the men followed. He went down within about half a mile of the Missourians' camp, drew his men up in line, and there watched them for some time. At last he said he did not think they intended to attack them that night as they appeared to be making preparations to go into camp for the night. He said, "Brethren, we, I think, will go back."

About that time my father came running down, and when he saw me and my brother, he asked us what we were doing. I told him we had come down to see what was going to be done. He said, "You and your brother go home. You may get killed here." I said that we were in no more danger of getting killed than he was. He replied in anger for us to go home at once and we started. We did not travel very fast and did not get back till he did.

That night the Mormons barricaded the town. We worked all night in doing so. It was not much of a barricade but it was better than none. The house my father lived in was a double two-story long house on the edge of the square. The upper story had nothing in it and that was packed as full of women and children as could get into it. We all sat on the floor as close as we could get and there we sat all night. In the morning we came down about sunrise and stood looking at the Missourians' camp on Goose Creek, about one and a half miles from us, when Seymour Brownson came running up; he took command after David Patten's death. He called out, "Every man to his post."

<sup>46</sup>No right, I assume he means, to slaughter the Mormons. In the other manuscript, John W. Rigdon lays the blame more directly on "the notorious General Lucas," who, he says, was determined to wreak his vengeance on the Mormons and offered his services to Governor Boggs to rid the state of these aliens. Lucas mistook a defensive action of the Mormons against antagonistic people from Carroll County as offensive warfare and used this false information to get Boggs to issue his extermination order. (pp. 128-32.)

<sup>47</sup>The first day of November.

<sup>48</sup>That is, during this incident.

The Missourians started out to see what we would do, and when they saw us looking over the breastworks prepared to fight, they turned around and went back. That maneuver on the part of the Missourians was repeated three times, and the fourth time they marched toward us, they had a flag of truce hitched on the end of a gun. Seymour Brownson, with three or four others, jumped over the breastworks and went down to meet them. It was General Lucas with about 250 of his men whom Brownson met there.

He halted his men and Brownson said, "General Lucas, what do you want?"

He said he had come to talk with him.

Brownson said, "Talk away; I am here to listen."

Lucas said, "Brownson, you need not put any airs on with me. We can whip you."

Brownson said, "I do not know but you can, but you can't do it so long as there is a man alive who can fire a gun. Some of your men will never go home."

Lucas said he wanted to fix matters up if it could be done without fighting.

Brownson said, "What is your offer?"

Lucas said, "If you will surrender up all your arms and surrender some of the head men of the Church as hostages for your promise, they shall be kindly treated and well kept, and agree to leave the state in ten months, we will settle the matter and we will go home."

Brownson said, "General Lucas, I cannot make any such agreement with you, but I will tell you what I will do. You stay where you are and I will go up into the village and see some of the head men of the church and what they will agree to do. I will come back and let you know."

Lucas said, "All right, but hurry up."

Brownson went immediately up to the village. He saw Joseph and Hyrum, my father and Lyman Wight and several others. Lyman Wight said, "Brethren, we can kill some of those men but they will kill us, and what is to become of the women and children that we leave behind us? I think discretion the better part of valor."

It was agreed to accept Lucas' offer, and Brownson went back and told General Lucas that they would accept his offer. Lucas and his men came up to the breast-works and took the guns out of the hands of the men, and then about 200 men rode into town and visited every house and took every gun they could find, and they pretended to be mad to think such an agreement had been made.<sup>48</sup> Lucas came and took Joseph and Hyrum Smith, Sidney Rigdon, Lyman Wight, George Robinson (my brother-in-law), Alexander McRae, and several others and took them down into camp. As soon as they were into camp they were put under guard and in less than an hour after they arrived in camp, a drumhead court-martial was called and they were all sentenced to be shot on the public square the next morning, and this decision would have been carried out if it had not been for General Doniphan.

He told General Lucas that if those men were shot in accordance with the

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<sup>48</sup> Joseph Smith adds these details in his account: "After depriving these of their arms the mob continued to hunt the brethren like wild beasts, and shot several, ravished the women, and killed one near the city. No saint was permitted to go in or out of the city; and meantime the Saints lived on parched corn." *History*, III, 202.

decision of the court-martial, he would order his brigade to march, as it was nothing more than murder and he would have nothing to do with it. He said to General Lucas, "You have got those men into your possession by promising them protection and fair treatment and now you are going to shoot them in the presence of their families," and looking General Lucas square in the eye, he said, "You hurt one of these men if you dare and I will hold you personally responsible for it, and at some other time you and I will meet again when in mortal combat and we will see who is the better man."

Lucas replied to Doniphan, "If that is the way you feel about it, they shall not be shot."

The next morning they brought them all into town for the purpose of giving them an opportunity to bid their wives and children goodbye. Joseph Smith and Hyrum Smith were taken to their house under guard. My father and Robinson were brought to my father's house. Robinson and his wife were then living with my father and while they were bidding their families goodbye, the house was crowded with Missourians with guns, so that it was almost impossible to get in or out of the house, and they were laughing at the scene being enacted. After they had bid their families goodbye, they got into a wagon. Joseph and Hyrum having returned and being in the wagon, General Lucas gave the order to march and they all went away. We suppose it was the last time we should ever see them. They were taken to Clay County in Missouri and again court-martialed and again sentenced to be shot, but what prevented [it] I never knew.

After a time they sent Robinson and several others home and took Joseph Smith, Hyrum, my father, Alexander McRae, Lyman Wight, and others, whose names I have forgotten, and put them into Liberty Jail, about 25 miles from Far West, where I went to see them.

Dr. Madisib<sup>49</sup> of Terre Haute, Indiana came to Far West to see what had become of Thomas Marsh's wife. Marsh and his wife had left the Church at this time. Madisib, I think, was a rich man. He came to Far West in a covered two-seated carriage drawn by a beautiful span of cream-colored horses, and he tendered this carriage and horses to my mother and Joe Smith's wife for the purpose of going to see their husbands imprisoned in Liberty Jail, if they could get someone who would drive the horses.

Joe Smith's wife took her oldest son along (now President of the Reorganized Church) and my mother took me. We started rather late in the morning and did not get to the jail till after dark, and they would not let us go in till the next morning. After taking breakfast at the hotel, we were taken to the jail and there remained for three days, and that is the time and place where young Joseph Smith claims, or did claim, that his father Joseph Smith ordained him to be the leader of the church at his father's death.<sup>50</sup>

<sup>49</sup> I have been unable to identify this name.

<sup>50</sup> The Reorganized Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints holds to the view that Joseph Smith III (1832-1914), eldest surviving son of Joseph Smith, Jr., was designated and blessed (not ordained) publicly on at least two occasions, between 1839 and 1844, by his father, some day to be his successor in the prophetic office. This claim is based in part upon the sworn testimony of three eye witnesses, given in the Circuit Court of the United States, Western District of Missouri, Kansas City, Missouri, in litigation between the Reorganized Church and the Church of Christ in 1893. (See *Complainants' Abstract of Pleading and Evidence*, pp. 27, 28, 33, 40, 41, 180.)

Joseph Smith III writes: "There is a memory of accompanying my mother on another

I was there and was with young Joe Smith all the time while we were at the jail. When the jailer let me out to go around to see the town, Joseph Smith went with me, and when I went back he always went with me, as he was a little afraid to play out alone, thinking there might be danger; and I say no such ordination ever took place while we were at Liberty Jail. If it had, I should have remembered it. Young Joe Smith, the prophet's son, and I are the only ones who are alive that were in the jail at that time. I know the ordination which he claims never took place. I was only at Liberty Jail once, nor neither was young Joe Smith.<sup>51</sup> We went out in the same carriage and came back together. I understand that he now claims that his father blessed him, but he cannot remember whether he was ordained or not.

I say his father did not bless him either when we bade him goodbye. The turnkey stood at the door with the key in his hand. His father might have put his hand on his son's head and said, "Goodbye, my son." I do not say he did, but he might have done so. It is strange that when he was ordained by William Marks and a man by the name of [Zenas H.] Gurley and Mr. [William W.] Blair fourteen years after his father's death,<sup>52</sup> he had not thought of his ordination in Liberty Jail and told them about it. But he was silent about the matter till he was questioned about his authority to lead the church, and then he suddenly remembered that he had been ordained by his father in Liberty Jail when he was nearly eleven years old. Marks and Gurley were once members of the Mormon Church and Mr. Blair was never a member of the Church. Marks and Gurley had been cut off from the Church some years before Joseph Smith [III] was ordained, and none of those who did ordain him had any authority to do so. A man authorized by the Mormon Church must be ordained by someone who has this priesthood to confer or else it is good for nothing and Marks and Gurley and Blair did not have the priesthood to confer on anyone.

I understand now that Smith claims that his father appointed him to the position, but when or where no one knows but himself. He has no claim to be leader of the Mormon Church except that he is the son of his father Joseph Smith, and that of itself gives him no authority.

My father, Sidney Rigdon, was taken out of Liberty Jail to be tried.<sup>53</sup>

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visit to the [Liberty] jail, and it was upon the occasion of one or the other of these visits that my father, with another, laid hands upon my head and blessed me, as his eldest son, to the blessings which had come down to him through the blessings of his progenitors. It could not be expected that I, a child of but six years, should remember the phraseology used by Father upon that occasion, but the circumstance itself was indelibly fastened upon my memory. . . . On two of these occasions I was with my mother, according to my memory."

It was later, in 1842, that he was blessed again, according to his own account: "Elder [James] Whitehead stated that he was present at a meeting in the Brick Store when a number of prominent elders, including Bishop Whitney, Uncle Hyrum, and Willard Richards, were with my father, and that I was called into the room. There, with one of the brethren holding the bottle of oil used in the simple ceremony, my father anointed my head, laid hands on me and blessed me as his son, pronouncing upon me the calling of being successor as Prophet and Seer. He said the scene was solemn and impressive, and that he seemed to recognize it as an ordination of a sort, as designating me as the successor to Father in the presidency of the church." *Joseph Smith III and the Restoration*, eds. Mary A. S. Anderson and Bertha A. A. Hulmes (Independence, Missouri, 1952), pp. 13-14; 318.

<sup>51</sup> That is, and so was young Joe Smith.

<sup>52</sup> It was actually in April 1860 at Amboy, Illinois, when the ordination took place.

<sup>53</sup> About the end of January 1839.



Ben Riggs stated that he told him that Rigdon had killed a man and hid his body in the bushes. The judge told Ben Riggs that he could not try a man for murder on that statement; he must show the man he killed. Riggs replied that was all he knew about it. The judge said, "If that is all you know, I shall discharge the man," and he did so. The Missourians said to father after he was discharged that he could not get away. They had him and they were going to kill him, and he was taken back to jail. He remained there for a few days.

One night<sup>54</sup> a friend of Father's came riding to the back door of the jail with a horse all saddled. The man having charge of the jail, being friendly, helped him get away. He bade his fellow prisoners goodbye, got on the horse, and with his guide got safely to Quincy, Illinois. His family, knowing he had left the jail, went to Quincy and joined him.

Joseph Smith and Hyrum and the other prisoners were soon after taken from the jail, as the people of the county were tired of keeping them, and a party of men were to take them to Daviess County, but the people of Daviess County would not take them. They were told not to bring them back but to dispose of them as they might deem proper. They started with the prisoners for Daviess County and they did not feel like killing them. They got whisky and got drunk, and while they were in that condition the prisoners escaped on their horses. They reached Quincy, Illinois, and were free.

After Father got to Quincy, he and his family remained four weeks and then went to what was called Big Neck Prairie and rented a farm with Robinson and were preparing to raise crops, when father heard of Dr. [Isaac] Galland, who used to be an Indian agent who had a place to sell near the little town of Commerce on the Mississippi. He went to see Galland. He had a two-story stone house with porch above, and below a fine grove of locus trees growing in front of the house, which was near the river bank. He bought the place. Father did not come back to Big Neck Prairie, but wrote Robinson what he had done and Galland was willing to give immediate possession. A man named Herrick, a Mormon who was driven out of Missouri, was in search of a farm to rent and Robinson let him have the one he had rented and he packed up and moved to Commerce. It was only about fifty miles away. Galland took his family to St. Louis. We found Commerce very sickly. We all got well except Father's mother, who was 81.<sup>55</sup>

We had not been at Commerce, or what was afterwards called Nauvoo, but a short time till Joseph Smith, Hyrum, Vinson Knight and a few others came to see us. Joseph and Hyrum went about one half mile below us and bought out [Hugh] White, who had a fine place.<sup>56</sup> Joe and Hyrum laid out land in village lots and offered them for sale. Joe and Hyrum moved on the White farm that fall. Hence came the city of Nauvoo. It is a Hebrew name.

<sup>54</sup> February 14, 1839.

<sup>55</sup> In Joseph Smith's history of the Church, the discovery of Commerce as a possible settling place for the Mormons is attributed to Israel Barlow in the fall of 1839, not to the Rigdons and Robinsons. The brief account in the *Dictionary of American Biography* has it that the Rigdons were actually reluctant to settle at Nauvoo, yet did so at Joseph Smith's urging. (XV, 601.)

<sup>56</sup> For \$9000. The Nauvoo property was deeded to George W. Robinson, Rigdon's son-in-law, with the express understanding that it should later be deeded to the Church when the Church had paid for it in full.

Robinson selected the name, he being quite a Hebrew scholar. It means beautiful.

Sometime in the winter of 1839 or 1840 immigration commenced very fast and by the spring of 1840 there was quite a large settlement. The town gained so fast that by 1844 it was to number 20,000.<sup>57</sup>

In the spring of 1844, Joe Smith sent Father to the city of Pittsburg, Pennsylvania, to take charge of a little Mormon Church and in June, 1844, he and his family started. Ebenezer Robinson, who was a church printer, was to go with him to print a paper. We took a steamboat as far as St. Louis. Joe Smith and all the dignitaries came to the boat to bid us goodbye, and the day before we reached Pittsburg, Joe Smith and Hyrum were shot to death by a mob at Carthage Jail, seventeen miles from Nauvoo.

My father went back to Nauvoo and the Quorum of the Twelve placed the leadership of the church on Brigham Young. This hurt Father's feelings. He claimed he was the man [on] whom the leadership of the Church should have been placed. He said he had done more to establish the Church than any member of it. He had spent the best years of his life in preaching the gospel and had sacrificed fame and fortune to do it, and now to be turned down and asked to take a subordinate place under Young or any other man, he could not do it. He left Nauvoo, never to return.<sup>58</sup>

<sup>57</sup> Some significant events in the life of Rigdon between 1839 and 1844 which the son does not mention: In December 1839, Rigdon set out with Joseph Smith to Washington to assist in pleading with President Martin Van Buren for protection for the Church members in Missouri and Illinois. In April 1841, on the twelfth anniversary of the organization of the Church, he gave the dedicatory address at the laying of the cornerstone of the temple at Nauvoo, Illinois. Between 1841 and 1844, Rigdon had several fallings out with Joseph Smith, but was always reconciled to his authority. In May of 1844 he was nominated as Vice President to run with Joseph Smith for the Presidency of the United States to represent the Mormons. One interesting event mentioned in the "Life Story" but not included here is the occasion when Joseph Smith proposed "spiritual marriage" to Rigdon's daughter Nancy in 1843, "promising her great exaltation in the world to come," the brother reports. She "resented" the proposal and "utterly refused" him. Sidney Rigdon was "very indignant at Joseph Smith to think he should make such a proposal . . . [for] it caused considerable talk among the neighbors and acquaintances of the Rigdon family." This was the first the Rigdon family had heard of the doctrine of plural marriage. The son reports that Joseph Smith denied having proposed to the daughter, but Rigdon claims that he later got him to confess that it was true. Sidney Rigdon never could stomach polygamy. (pp. 164-6.)

<sup>58</sup> By 1844 the split between Joseph Smith and Sidney Rigdon was wide. There is evidence that when Rigdon left Nauvoo in June of 1844, he had no intention of returning. When Joseph Smith was killed, he rushed back, expecting to be made President of the Church. His claim to the position was based in part on a vision he said he had had at Pittsburgh and in part on his claim that the Twelve Apostles of the Church had no such right while one of the First Presidency was still in office. He said he "had received at the hands of Joseph Smith an ordination higher than that of Brigham Young or any member of the Twelve. . . . He could not and would not submit to acknowledge Brigham Young as President." (Rigdon MS p. 180.) After Brigham Young was chosen President, Rigdon was excommunicated for his antagonism. He was given a trial before the councils of the Church and found guilty of heresy and insubordination. The Church court declared him "cut off from the communion of the faithful, and delivered to the devil, to be buffeted in the flesh for a thousand years." ("The Trial of Sidney Rigdon," *Times and Seasons*, pp. 649-50.) Rigdon then made his way back to Pittsburg, where he organized a group of disgruntled Mormons in April, 1845, into what he called The Church of Christ. As their president, he gave them revelations and prophecies, and he encouraged complete dissociation from the Mormons in the Midwest. Within a few years, however, he became too arbitrary a leader

I do not think the Church made any mistake in placing the leadership on Brigham Young. He, in my opinion, was the best man for the place that the Church could have selected. Sidney Rigdon had no executive ability, was broken down with sickness, and could not have taken charge of the Church at that time. The Church had to leave Nauvoo and seek a place farther west. The task would have been too great for Father. I have no fault to find with the Church with doing what they did. It was the best thing they could have done under the circumstances.

I was baptized in the Mormon Church in 1839 at Nauvoo. I was very sick. My father said I would have to be baptized. That day in the month of June, Joe Smith and Hyrum came to the house and Hyrum took me in his arms and carried me to the river and waded out a short distance and was going to set me down, but Joe Smith said, "Do not set him down; hold him in your arms." He baptized me, with Joseph Smith and Father as the only witnesses. I was taken back and put in bed but I was never confirmed into the Church and there are no minutes on the Church books that I was ever baptized, and there would not be unless I was confirmed after being baptized. I got up, sometime after Joseph Smith and Hyrum and Father had gone to Washington to present grievances of the Church against the Missourians to the general government. My father did not get back till the next summer, so I presume my confirmation was forgotten. Therefore, I am not an apostate from the Church, for I never belonged to it till two years ago and then I was baptized by J. M. McFarland in the Hudson River at New York City.

My father, after leaving Nauvoo, came to Pittsburg.<sup>69</sup> The little church that was there concluded to follow him, but he was so extreme in his ideas that they left him. He was at times so perfectly wild that he could not control himself, but still he claimed he ought to have been placed at the head of the Church at Nauvoo. His daughter Eliza, about nineteen years old, died in Pittsburg. That affected him very much and he never was the man he once was.

After that he went from Pittsburg to Green Castle, Pennsylvania, but did not remain long there, and from there he went to Cuba, Allegany County, New York, and joined George Robinson, who had traded some property at Nauvoo for a farm in Allegany County. The farm was on Jackson Hill, and from there he moved to Friendship in the same county and there in 1876 he died.

He never preached after he came to Allegany County; his family would not let him. He seemed sane upon every other subject except religion. When he got on that subject, he seemed to lose himself and his family would not permit him to talk on that subject, especially with strangers. I could talk to him on religion and he would not get excited but would talk as rational as he ever did and seemed in full possession of his faculties. He used to lecture to the students in the Academy at Friendship, deliver Fourth of July orations, make political speeches, and was posted well on the history of general gov-

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and too visionary, and the group dwindled and disappeared. He began to purchase a settlement near Greencastle in the Cumberland Valley for his followers but could not raise the necessary funds. Together with his people he prayed for money "from on high," but did not get it. (Daryl Chase, "Sidney Rigdon, Early Mormon," unpublished thesis, University of Chicago, 1931.)

<sup>69</sup> In the fall of 1844.

ernment. He was always a Democrat; his first, and his last vote at 83, was for a Democrat.

I was admitted to the bar in 1859, and in 1863 health failed me and I went west with my brother and a company. In the fall, my health not being good at Omaha, I did not believe I could stand the winter and proposed to my brother to go to Salt Lake, which we did with a man coming with cattle, and we rode with mule teams.

Brigham Young sent for us. He seemed glad to see us. He wanted to know if my father and mother would come to Salt Lake if he would send for them. He said he would send a mule train after them in the spring and he would bring them across the plains in a carriage in comfort and take care of them during life. I told them I did not think they would come. I wrote to my father and told him of President Young's offer, and in about 35 days an answer came declining the offer.

In the spring, after staying about 23 miles south of Salt Lake, my brother went back to the mines and I came to Salt Lake for the purpose of going home. While in Utah I saw a great many things among the members that seemed so different from what they were. They would swear, use tobacco, were vulgar in habits, drank whisky and get drunk. They did not preach the gospel when they went to church. They would tell about drawing wood, how to raise wheat and corn, and not a word said about the gospel. [They] came to meetings in everyday clothes and did not seem to care anything about religion. Mormonism seemed a humbug and I said when I got home I would find out from my father how the Book of Mormon came into existence. I made up my mind he should tell me all he knew. He had not seen a Mormon in 25 years.

Soon after I got home, I told him the state of affairs in Salt Lake and, as it was all a humbug, I wanted to know how the Book of Mormon came into existence, for he owed it to his family to tell all he knew about it and should not go down to his grave with any such grave secrets.

He said, "My son, I will swear before God that what I have told you about the Book of Mormon is true. I did not write or have anything to do with its production, and if Joseph Smith ever got that [i.e., the Book of Mormon], other [than] from that which he always told me ([that is,] that an angel appeared and told him where to go to find the plates upon which the book was engraved in a hill near Palmyra), Smith guarded his secret well, for he never let me know by word or action that he got them differently, and I believe he did find them as he said, and that Joe Smith was a prophet, and this world will find it out some day."

I was surprised, [for he was] smarting under what he thought was the ingratitude of the Church for turning him down and not having been with them for over 25 years. I must believe he thought he was telling the truth. He was at this time in full possession of his faculties. What object had he in concealing the fact any longer if he did write it? My father died in 1876 at the age of 83, a firm believer in the Mormon Church.

After my father's death, I told Mother what my father had told me about the Book of Mormon. She said, "Your father told you the truth. He did not write it, and I know, as he could not have written it without my knowing it, for we were married several years before the book was published, and if he wrote it, it must have been since our marriage. I was present and so was your

sister Athalia Rigdon, who was a girl of about ten years old when the book was presented to your father, and she remembers the circumstances as well as any recollections of her life."

When Joe Smith and Hyrum were killed at Carthage in June, 1844, their bodies were put into an oak box and sent to Nauvoo, and Brigham Young took the box and had it made up into walking canes. He sent one to Father in Pittsburg and this cane was his constant companion for about thirty years. When he died, my mother kept the cane, and when she died, several years after, it was given to me. When I came to Salt Lake the last time, I brought it with me and gave it to President Joe [Joseph F.] Smith to be placed in the [Church] Museum.<sup>60</sup>

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<sup>60</sup> John W. Rigdon's other manuscript provides a better note to end on: "The religious world did not know him, simply because he taught a doctrine that they did not believe, and for that have condemned him to a place among the unbelievers in the world beyond. But when God shall come to make up his jewels, Sidney Rigdon, who they profess to despise, may stand brighter and more glorious than they in the Kingdom." (pp. 198-9.)

*But the longer I live, the more obvious it is to me that the most sacred act of a man's life is to say and to feel, "I believe such and such to be true." All the greatest rewards and all the heaviest penalties of existence cling about that act.*

*Thomas Huxley*