

# The Messenger

Of the Reorganized Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints.

The Truth shall Make you Free.—Jesus.

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## History of the Reorganization of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints;

*Being a brief statement of the principal facts connected with its rise and early progress, together with the principles underlying it, or which distinguish it from the various factions which have arisen among the Latter Day Saints.*

### CHAPTER I.

Having already shown, in the History of the Apostasy, that the church established on April 6th, A. D. 1830, was "rejected," dissolved or disorganized, in accordance with the threatening, and that the body, or larger portion of its members were scattered abroad; some entering into one faction, and some another; while perhaps the greater number stood aloof from all; it now remains to show *how*, when, where, and by what means and authority it has been reorganized and reinstated in the sight of heaven, in its original form and power.

The original organization began on the 6th day of April, 1830, was the work of years, by commandment, after a pattern. The Reorganization must needs be by a commandment also, and by the same pattern. It may be safely assumed that no important religious movement occurs without an inspiration that constitutes its life and power; and this is true of the renewal of the work and the bringing forth of the Reorganization.

In the general disorder and darkness that prevailed from the death of Joseph Smith, here and there appeared a gleam of light and hope,—a manifestation of the Spirit that all was not lost, but that "truth should yet prevail." Many ran "to and fro" in the character of prophets, leaders and shepherds; and knowledge certainly increased; but too often at great expense to the learner, without a corresponding benefit. Among these appeared William Smith; who, in the spring of 1850, called a Conference, at Covington, Kentucky; from which time he visited many of the branches and scattered Saints, teaching "lineal priesthood" as applying to the Presidency of the Church; and thus disposing of all pretenders already arisen, or to rise out of the posterity of the original President of the Church. This principle, though pretty clearly shown in the books, had been almost entirely overlooked, or forgotten by the Saints; but when their attention was thus called to it, many at once received it as the solution of the question of "Presidency." Wm. Smith taught also, in connection with this, that it was his right, as the only surviving brother of the former President, and uncle (and natural guardian) of the seed of Joseph, to stand, during the *interim*, as President, *pro tem*. And in this there seemed a general acquiescence on the part of the Saints among whom he labored; and he was so acknowledged, and began to

organize, choosing Lyman Wight and Aaron Hook as Counselors, *pro tem*. to the President, *pro tem*., and Joseph Wood as Counselor and spokesman. Many branches, and nearly all the Saints in Northern Illinois and Southern Wisconsin were identified with this movement, and among them was enjoyed a large measure of the spiritual gifts.

During the spring and summer of 1851, Palestine, in Lee County, Illinois, had been designated as a stake, and become the residence of Wm. Smith, Wood, Hook and others; and the two former had visited most of the branches in Wisconsin, among which was the one at Beloit, Rock County, Wisconsin. This branch was originally raised up by the labors and ministry of Jason W. Briggs, in 1843, who was their presiding Elder at the time of this movement. In all their public discourses, and most of their private instructions, they had uniformly condemned all the excesses known to exist among the different factions, and especially polygamy, with all its train of pre-requisites and consequences. But in the course of their visit it transpired, that they not only believed in the principle of a plurality of wives, but were really in the practice of it stealthily, and under the strongest vows of secrecy. This created in some minds a terrible conflict between faith and infidelity. The case was this, here were these men ministering in the name of the Lord; baptism and the laying on of hands; and the gifts of the Spirit in prophecy, tongues, interpretation, healings, &c., followed according to the promise; and now it turned out that they had been, and still were, double tongued, and practicing what the books declare "an abomination." The proof that such was the character of the men at the time, was full and positive; and at a conference held at Palestine, in October 6th of that year, (1851), they threw off the mask, in a council called to Priests' Lodge, and confessed to the belief and practice of polygamy in the name of the Lord. Among those who attended that conference were James Blakeslee, Alva Smith, Edwin Cadwell, C. F. Stiles and E. R. Briggs, of Illinois; and Ira J. Patten, David Powell, Henry Lowe, John Harrington, John O'Neil and J. W. Briggs of Wisconsin. The Latter named, upon returning to his home, perplexed with this intermingling of truth and falsehood; of right and wrong; light and darkness, sought unto God for its solution, in fervent and continued prayer. And—

"While pondering in my heart the situation of the Church, on the 18th day of November, 1851, on the prairie, about three miles northwest of Beloit, Wisconsin, the Spirit of the Lord came upon me, and the visions of truth opened to my mind, and the Spirit of the Lord said unto me, 'Verily, verily, saith the Lord, even Jesus Christ,

unto his servant, Jason W. Briggs, concerning the church:—Behold, I have not cast off my people; neither have I changed in regard to Zion. Yea, verily, my people shall be redeemed, and my law shall be kept which I revealed unto my servant Joseph Smith, Jr., for I am God and not man, and who is he that shall turn me from my purpose, or destroy whom I would preserve? Wolves have entered into the flock, and who shall deliver them? Where is he that giveth his life for the flock? Behold, I will judge those who call themselves shepherds, and have preyed upon the flock of my pastures. And because you have asked me in faith concerning William Smith, this is the answer of the Lord thy God concerning him. I, the Lord, have permitted him to represent the rightful heir to the presidency of the high priesthood of my Church by reason of the faith and prayers of his father, and his brothers, Joseph and Hyrum Smith, which came up before me in his behalf; and to respect the law of lineage, by which the holy priesthood is transmitted, in all generations, when organized into quorums. And the keys which were taught him by my servant Joseph were of me, that I might prove him therewith. And for this reason have I poured out my Spirit through his ministrations, according to the integrity of those who received them.

"But as Esau despised his birthright, so has William Smith despised my law, and forfeited that which pertained to him as an Apostle and High Priest in my Church. And his spokesman, Joseph Wood, shall fall with him, for they are rejected of me. They shall be degraded in their lives, and shall die without regard; for they have wholly forsaken my law, and given themselves to all manner of uncleanness, and prostituted my law and the keys of power entrusted to them, to the lusts of the flesh, and have run greedily in the way of adultery. Therefore, let the Elders whom I have ordained by the hand of my servant Joseph, or by the hand of those ordained by him, resist not this authority, nor faint in the discharge of duty, which is to preach my gospel as revealed in the record of the Jews, and the Book of Mormon, and the Book of Doctrine and Covenants; and cry repentance and remission of sins through obedience to the gospel, and I will sustain them, and give them my Spirit; and in mine own due time will I call upon the seed of Joseph Smith, and will bring one forth, and he shall be mighty and strong, and he shall preside over the high priesthood of my Church; and then shall the quorums assemble, and the pure in heart shall gather, and Zion shall be re-inhabited, as I said unto my servant Joseph Smith;—after many days shall all these things be accomplished, saith the Spirit. Behold, that which ye received as my celestial law is not of me, but is the doctrine of Baalam. And I command you to denounce it and proclaim against it; and I will give you power, that none shall be able to withstand your words, if you rely upon me; for my Spirit shall attend you.—And the Spirit said unto me, Write, write, write;—write the revelation and send it unto the Saints at Palestine, and at Voree, and at Waukesha, and to all places where this doctrine is taught as my law;—and whosoever will humble themselves before me, and ask of me, shall receive of my Spirit a testimony that these words are of me.' Even so, Amen."