

# HISTORY OF THE REORGANIZATION.



In the *Saints Herald* for the 8th inst. is a reprint of the "History of the Reorganization," by my father, written in 1859, and after reading, I dare say that many good-meaning and kind-hearted Saints will say, "Why is it; and how is it that father Gurley's wife and children have withdrawn from the Church?" To them the matter will appear somewhat inexplicable, but to *us* who *know* the circumstances, and *heard* the *revelments* spoken of by my father, together with other *revelments* made through the same sister at the same times and places, and through *others* at divers times during the inception of the Reorganization—to *us*, there seems no inconsistency in our act, but a *consistency* with the work of *reformation* then commenced. Now to explain, let us go back a little in the history of my father's family: be it remembered that my parents united with the Church in Canada, in the year 1838, and shortly after, my father became seized of, or baptized with the spirit of *Gathering*, then so earnestly taught by the Church, hence they, with many others, moved to their supposed Zion in Missouri, and were met by the mob in Clay (or Ray) county. After which they removed to Far West, in Caldwell county, where, after sharing with all concerned the vicissitudes and disappointments attendant upon such movements, they moved out of the state in the year 1839, and settled in Illinois, at La Harpe. In the year 1841 was revealed to the church the authority for baptizing for the dead, and it is stated upon good authority that its twin in birth (in the same year) was marrying for eternity, that is—"if any man's wife die, he has a *right* to marry another and be *sealed to both* for eternity; to the living and the dead."—Tract of Polygamy, p 8; or T. & S. Vol. 5, p 715. (Thus establishing polygamy for eternity.) I shall not discuss the origin and establishment of polygamy in this paper, but suffice it to say that my father, who was an over ardent admirer of the "Choice Seer," to such a degree that he would not have opposed him *in anything*, both accepted and believed these doctrines, just as fervently as any part of the Gospel—neither were these

the only addendas which my father accepted as a part of the faith, but my dear old mother, then known as a "weak-hearted," or "half-hearted" Mormon, and even called an "apostate," did *not* believe in such things for one solitary moment; neither had she any great confidence in the revelations of Joseph Smith as a rule of faith and practice.—And in 1844, or '45, they moved to the city of Nauvoo, Ill., where they remained until driven out in the autumn of 1846. Here occurred one of the most important items in our history. The evacuation of Nauvoo commenced in the spring or early summer of 1846. My father, full of zeal and faith in the Latter Day work, packed his tools (being a tanner and courier) in company with those of others for the great *West* (and to Salt Lake the tools went), being determined to go West with Brigham Young and the Twelve, for being one of the seven Presidents of Seventy (I believe), he felt that he *knew the* faith, and what the policy and measures of the "Choice Seer" were—but, alas! "the best laid plans of mice and men gang aft aglee." My mother, with her "apostacy," stood in his way. But he was determined—however, as the last resort and only hope, my mother betook herself to earnest, constant prayer; asking God to hedge up the way to prevent our going West, and finally prayed the Lord to destroy the life of the only team—a fine pair of large horses—and laugh who may—my mother's prayer was answered. Both horses died, and as father was not able to replace the team and mother more determined not to go, her family were saved from the meshes of Utah Mormonism. And that same mother, with all her faithlessness in the revelations aforesaid, saw in a dream or vision a personage in white standing in a cloud, looking and weeping over Nauvoo. The memory of my father is very dear to me, and God and he shall say whether I proved myself a loving son, but be it known to all who read these lines that I love my mother with an eternal, an abiding affection; and further be it known that while I love and revere them both, in all matters of religious conscience, if I believed them or either of them to be not in harmony with Christ, I should certainly try and stand with Christ, and in eternity (if not in time) they would bless me for it. From Nauvoo we moved to Jo Daviess county, Ill., thence to Voree, and thence to Yellowstone, Wis., where father renounced quite a portion of his former faith, at which time he felt just as he expressed it that there was "only one remaining of my associates that I could call brother." (I think it better to stand with *one*

and agree, than with ten thousand and disagree.) During the formative period of this reform work, lineal priesthood, rights of lineage, and "little Joseph" were the chief topics of my father, whose position upon these points was strongly in favor of his former predilections (and which had been received by him from the "Choice Seer" and associates). Hence when my sister Julia (aged 15) at the time stated by my father, gave expression to, "It is his right by lineage," she only expressed what my father had previously talked and what he had previously believed. Shortly after this my father, full of zeal and faith, was anxious to know where they should *dig* for lead ore (being engaged in mining), and this same sister was directed by him to make inquiry. Whereupon, by a greater and more powerful manifestation of the Spirit than before, almost carried to certain spot of earth, declared, "In the name of God, it's here,"—and then proceeded to point out how the different veins of ore ran through the earth and told its connection with the Latter Day work and prophesied of Joseph's coming, and how the work should prosper, etc. Well, we were poor in this world's goods, but that shaft (of the worst rock in Wisconsin) proved a Waterloo to us and Brother Reuben New Nink, for every dollar earned was sunk in that maelstrom, the "Rock Shaft." You ask, possibly, "how could Bro. Gurley do this?" I answer, he had promise of the earth's treasure by Patriarchal blessing through old Father Smith? And further, his example is found in the life of the "Choice Seer," who with others went to Salem, Mass., in the year 1836, for the ostensible purpose of finding a hidden treasure, but failing, received a revelation *promising* all the "gold and silver of Salem" to them, see MS. V. 15, p 822. Be it also remembered that my sister's prediction was not the only one which stranded on that "rock shaft." Oh, no! many others made predictions. One was, "three feet to the north," and another fifteen feet to the north, and "behold it is there."—Each proved an *ignis fatuus*. Reader, you will find upon proper examination that *all* these individuals were answered according to the idol set up in the heart. See Ezk. 14. That is, according to the desires of the heart, or as Paul puts it "according to the measure of faith." (So where the vision is not clear, the prophecy fails for lack of faith), or as Bro. Jason Briggs puts it, "the current of inspiration is usually in the direction of antecedent thought," in proof of which I cite the further fact that go to these different factions of Mormons and they testify with a great deal of as-

surance and positive assertion, not only that Joseph Smith was a prophet of God and that B. Young and John Taylor are his righteous successors, but also that polygamy is true for God has revealed it to them. At the same time the Reorganized testify that Joseph is a prophet and that his son is his successor and that polygamy is wrong, and a few ardent admirers yet testify that James J. Strang is the "annointed." My father denounced polygamy and rejected also the marrying or "sealing for eternity." He also did not insist on baptism for the dead, nor the Lord's boarding house, and even rejected the idea that Nauvoo was a stake to gather to or Far West—though formerly appointed in the name of the Lord. Now come the sons of this man, and as a continuation of the rule of rejection and reformation, they reject the revelations of Joseph Smith as a rule of faith and practice (believing that he proved himself an unsafe leader), but affirming the gospel as taught by the Saviour and the original witnesses, denying the right to Joseph Smith, or any other man or angel, to add a codicil to the last will and testament of Christ. In the early history referred by my father I usually attended the meetings and was used by him for the especial purpose of repeating afterward what had been given by the Spirit, being blessed with an excellent memory, and now that a persistent effort is being made by the *Herald* to give certain coloring to everything of the past, apparently for the purpose of restoring Nauvoo Mormonism (barring polygamy), I feel it my duty, though somewhat painful, to give some facts which I think will assist the public in rendering a righteous judgment.

That my father's crowning gift was *faith*, I think, will hardly be disputed, but that he went to the extreme in obtaining spirit manifestations is certainly clear to my mind.—That he did well in the reformation, considering his environments, is also true, and I believe, if here to-day, would occupy the same position his sons do, for I think, ere this, he has learned that a different *thesis* than that of dogmatism should be made for Joseph Smith's work.

Hoping that all who desire truth may learn and profit by the fact that "God hath spoken unto us by His Son," and that the enjoyment to-day is the same as of yore, "hear ye Him," I remain,

Yours for truth,

Z. H. GURLEY.

PLEASANTON, IOWA, May 12, 1886.