DEFENCE

in a

REHEARSAL OF MY GROUNDS

for

SEPARATING MYSELF

from the

LATTER DAY SAINTS

BY OLIVER COWDERY

Second Elder of The Church of Christ.

This Defence is not protected by a copyright, as I wish no man, to be confined alone to my permis-
sion in printing what is meant for the eyes and
knowledge of the nations of the earth.
"God doth not walk in crooked paths;
Neither doth he turn to the right hand,
Nor the the left; neither doth he vary
From that which he hath said."

Pressley's Job Office
Norton, Ohio,
1839.
DEAR PEOPLE OF GOD:--I offer you a Defence which I am grieved to make, but my opposers have put me to the necessity, and so far as my memory serves, I pledge my veracity for the correctness of the account.

I deny that I have ever conspired with any, or ever exerted any influence to destroy the reputation of the First Elder, although evidence which is to be credited assures me that he has done everything he could to injure my standing, and his influence has been considerably exerted to destroy my reputation and, I fear, my life.

You will remember in the meantime, that those who seek to villify my character have been constantly encouraged by him. There was a time when I thought myself able to prove to the satisfaction of every man that the translator of the Book of Mormon, was worthy of the appellation of a Seer and a Prophet of the Lord, and in which he held over me a mysterious power which even now I fail to fathom; but I fear I may have been deceived, and especially so fear since knowing that Satan has led his mind astray.

(1) When the Church of Christ was set up by revelation, he was called to be First Elder, and I was called to be the Second Elder, and whatever he had of Priesthood (about which I am beginning to doubt also had I,

(2) But I certainly followed him too far when accepting, and reiterating, that none had authority from God to administer the ordinances of the Gospel, as I had then forgotten that John, the beloved disciple, was tarrying on earth and exempt from death.

I am well aware that a rehearsal of these things at this day will be unpleasant reading to the First Elder; yet so it is, and it is wisdom that it should be so. Without rehearsing too many things that have caused me to lose my faith in Bro. Joseph's seership, I regard his frequent prediction that he himself shall tarry on the earth till Christ shall come in glory, and that neither the rage of devils nor the malice of men shall ever cause him to fall by the hand of his enemies until he has seen Christ in the flesh at his final coming, as little short of a piece of blasphemy; and it may be classed with that revelation, that some among you will remember, which sent Bro. Page and me so unwisely to (3) /2/ Toronto with a prediction from the Lord by Urim and Thummim that we would there find a man anxious to buy the First Elder's copyright. I well remember we did not find him, and had to return surprised and disappointed. But so great was my faith, that, in going to Toronto, nothing but coolness pervaded my soul, every doubt was banished, and I as much expected that Bro. Page and I would fulfill the revelation as that we should live. And you may believe, without asking me to relate the particulars, that it would be no easy task to describe our desolation and grief.

Bro. Page and I did not think that God would have deceived us through "Urim and Thummim," exactly as came the Book of Mormon; and I well remember how hard I strove to drive away the foreboding which seized me, that the First Elder had made tools of us, where we
thought, in the simplicity of our hearts, that we were divinely commanded.

And what served to render the reflection past expression in its bitterness to me, was, that from his hand I received baptism, by the direction of the Angel of God, whose voice, as it has since struck me, did most mysteriously resemble the voice of Elder Sidney Rigdon, who, I am sure had no part in the transactions of that day, as the Angel was John the Baptist, which I doubt not and deny not when I afterward first heard Elder Rigdon, whose voice is so strikingly similar, I felt that this "dear" brother was to be in some sense, to me unknown, the herald of this church as the Great Baptist was of Christ.

(4) I never dreamed however, that he would influence the Prophet, Seer and Revelator to the Church of the Latter Day Saints, into the formation of a secret band at Far West, committed to depredations upon Gentiles and the actual assassination of apostates from the church, which was done in June last and was only one of many wrong steps.

These are facts which I am rehearsing, and if they shall be called in question, I am able to establish them by evidence which I can bring forward in abundance.

Still, although favored of God as a chosen witness to bear testimony to the divine authority of the Book of Mormon, and honored of the Lord in being permitted, without money and without price, to serve as scribe during the translation of the Book of Mormon, I have sometimes had seasons of skepticism, in which I did seriously wonder whether the Prophet and I were men in our sober senses when he would be translating from plates through the Urim and Thummim and the plates not be in sight at all.

But I believed both in the Seer and in the Seer Stone and what the First Elder announced as revelation from God, I accepted as such, and committed to paper with a glad mind and happy heart and swift pen; for I believed him to be the soul of honor and truth, a young man who would die before he would lie.

Man may deceive his fellow man, deception may follow deception, and the children of the wicked one may seduce the unstable, untaught in the ways of righteousness and peace, for I felt a solemn awe about me, being deep in the faith, that the First Elder was a Seer and Prophet of God, giving the truth unsullied through Urim and Thummim, dictated by the will of the Lord, and that he was persecuted for the sake of the truth which he loved. Could I have been deceived by him?

I could rehearse a number of things to show either that I was then deceived, or that he has since fallen from the lofty place in which fond affection had deemed him secure.

I remembered his experience as he had related it to me, and lacking wisdom, I went to God in prayer. I said: "O Lord, how dark everything is! Let thy glory lighten it, and make bright the path for me. Show me my duty. Let me be led of thy Spirit."
Shall I relate what transpired? I had a message from the Most High, as from the midst of eternity; for the vail was parted and the Redeemer Himself, clothed in glory, stood before me. And he said:

"After reproving the Latter Day Saints for their corruption and blindness in permitting their President, Joseph Smith, Jr., to lead them forth into errors, where I led him not, nor commanded him, and saying unto them, "Thus saith the Lord,' when I said it not unto him, thou shalt withdraw thyself from among them."

And I testify that Jesus, whose words I have been rehearsing, hath even so commanded me in an open vision.

The Lord revealed to me that the First Elder is leading the Saints astray, and ordered me to quit them after delivering the message which this Defence delivers. I shall ever remember this expression of the Saviour's grace with thanksgiving, and look upon his amazing goodness to me with wonder.

When I had sufficiently recovered my selfpossession to ask in regard to the errors into which Joseph Smith, Jr., was taking the Saints, the Redeemer instructed me plainly: "He hath given revelations from his own heart and from a defiled conscience as coming from my mouth and hath corrupted the covenant and altered words which I had spoken. He hath brought in high priests, apostles and other officers, which is these days, when the written Word sufficeth, are not in my church, and some of his deeds have brought shame to my heritage by the shedding of blood. He walketh in the vain imaginations of his heart, and my Spirit is holy and does not dwell in an unholy temple, nor are angels sent to reveal the great work of God to hypocrites."

I bowed my face in shame and said: "Lord! I entreat thee, give me grace to bear thy message in print where I fear to take it by word of mouth."

And he said, "The grace is given thee," and he vanished out of my sight.

Prepare your hearts, O ye Saints of the Most High, and come to understanding. The prophet hath erred and the people are gone astray through his error. God's word is open. We may read it. There is no 'First Presidency' there, no 'High Priesthood' save that of Christ himself, no Patriarch to the church, and wonderful to tell, the 'First Elder' hath departed from God in giving us these things, and in changing the name of the church.

Oh, the misery, distress and evil attendant upon giving heed unto the "doctrines of men!" The gospel has been perverted and the Saints are wandering in darkness, while a full cup of suffering is poured upon them. A society has been organized among them to inflict death upon those who are deemed apostates, with the knowledge and sanction of the First Elder.

This, I confess, is a dark picture to spread before those whom I am to warn, but they will pardon my plainness when I assure them of the truth of what I have written.
Bearing this message to them is the hardest work of my life, although many have been the privations and fatigue which have fallen to my lot to endure for the Gospel's sake since April 5th, 1829.

It is disgraceful to be led by a man who does not scruple to follow his own vain imagination, announcing his own schemes as revelations from the Lord.

And I fear he is led by a groundless hope, no better than the idle wind or the spider's web. Having cleared my soul by delivering the message, I do not deem it necessary to write further on the subject now.

Jesus has saved men in all ages and saves them now, and not by our Priesthood either. The "First Elder" errs as to that. The Lord has said, long since, and his word remains steadfast as the eternal hills, that to him who knocks it shall be opened, and whosoever will, may come and partake of the waters of life freely; but a curse will surely fall upon those who draw near to God with their mouths, and honor him with their lips, while their hearts are far from him.

I no longer believe that all the other churches are wrong.

Get right, O ye people, get right with God, and may the Lord remove his judgments from you, preserve you in his kingdom from all evil, and crown you in Christ. Amen.

O COWDERY.

March 3, 1839.