THE TRUTH ABOUT THE MORMONS

SECRETS OF SALT LAKE CITY

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So he fled from the soil of the New Jerusalem, and Jackson County, with all the marvels and magnificence that had been decreed for her, was hereafter only to be sung in song. But before the Saints departed utterly from the State there took place a curious incident that stamps itself on the nerve of history. In his “revelation” of April 8th, 1838, Smith announced the 4th of July as the day for the blessing of the Temple, adding that in one year from that date they should recommence laying its foundations. The anniversary found the Missouri Zion deserted, its occupants fugitives, its leaders in prison. But the command of the Lord must be obeyed! A conference was held and twelve apostles of the Church journeyed secretly to Far West. It was midnight when they arrived, and when they met on the selected site of the Temple each knew that their lives were forfeit if they were found. But before they left they fulfilled the prophecy. One man rolled a stone from one corner of the Temple to another. His name was Brigham Young.

CHAPTER V

POLYGAMY: THE THIN END OF THE WEDGE

What was the effect on the Mormon mind of this utter failure of Smith’s prophecies? Financially, the Mormons were ruined. Desperate indeed was their plight. In Jackson County alone, 120,000 dollars worth of their property had been destroyed, and in the entire State of Missouri, 2,000,000 dollars would not cover the damage. Everywhere the spring saw a large increase in the number of poor destitute Mormons, who, helpless and starving, begged from door to door. No less than 180 families waited on the banks of the Missouri for the moving ice to enable them to cross—sheltered by tents made of their bed clothing. But their faith was unchanged. In a meeting held at Far West, that of Brother Heber was announced to be “as good as ever.” Simeon Carter “didn’t think Joseph was a fallen Prophet.” Still he thought that “Joseph had not acted in all things according to the best wisdom.” Thomas Grover, however, was “firm in the faith,” and believed that “the time would come when Joseph would stand before kings and speak marvellous words.”
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Another brother, “stronger than ever in the faith, thought that the scourging they had got was necessary, and felt ready to praise God in prisons and in dungeons and in all circumstances.”

It seems, indeed, startlingly clear that this sustained persecution of the Mormons was a cardinal error. It forged and welded the Mormon hosts into a solid, fanatical, rigorous phalanx, impervious to reason, blind to ridicule. Left alone their crudities would have modified, and their own intolerances would have destroyed them. But, persecuted they were united, and united they rallied to Smith when, grasping the offer of a friendly landowner who was “out to sell,” he ordered his followers to make one further effort to establish Zion, and thus fulfill the prophecies of the “Book of Mormon.”

The site chosen was on the east bank of the Mississippi, forty miles above Quincy, and twenty miles south-west of Burlington, Iowa. There, by a bend of the river, upon rising ground that commanded a magnificent view of the winding Mississippi, was to be the home of the Saints. A group of tents and houses was on the place selected; the name was but an everyday word — “Commerce.” The Reformed Egyptian of the “Book of Mormon” supplied a better—“Nauvoo”, the beautiful—and there, after an ordeal rare even in the harried history of religious rancour, the Latter Day Saints sat down to build their City.

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It seemed, indeed, as if at last they were to have a chance of building the eternal city that so many had cemented with their blood, even before it was built. Here there was no local opposition. The Governor received them cordially. Rich landowners welcomed them with an enthusiasm that seems extraordinary, till we remember, that the influx of population meant a large increase in land values. All seemed favourable for Nauvoo the beautiful, and the city grew and flourished. The foundations of the houses were laid in 1889, and in less than two years over two thousand dwellings were erected, besides school houses and public edifices. The city was of great dimensions, laid out in beautiful order, with wide streets crossing each other at right angles, and rising on a quick incline from the rolling Mississippi. “At your side,” wrote a visitor, “is the Temple, the wonder of the world, and beneath you may behold handsome stores, large mansions, and fine cottages, interspersed with varied scenery.”

Thus it seemed that the vision of Joe Smith was after long travail to be realized.

The building of the Temple was immediately commenced. The site chosen was exceedingly fine—the summit of a hill commanding a view of unparalleled magnificence. Built of a polished white limestone, almost as hard as marble, 188 feet long, by 88 feet broad, it was surmounted by a pyramidal tower, which ascended by steps 170
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feet from the ground, for the Mormons had under persecution grown rich as well as powerful, and they lavished their wealth on this, the darling object of their affections—the Temple of the Lord round which their Zion was to grow and prosper.

Their persecution had, in fact, contributed signally to the glory and magnificence of the City that they now reared. All the Saints from afar had been ordered to come to Nauvoo, “with all your gold and your silver and your precious stones, and with all your antiquities... and bring the box-tree, and the fir-tree, and the pine-tree, together with all the precious trees of the earth, and with copper and with brass, and with zinc, and with all the most precious things of the earth.”

The response was lavish. Throughout the States not only Mormons, but their sympathizers and friends, dispatched the “most precious things of the earth” in liberal quantities; often as a protest against the Missouri massacre. The Prophet’s triumph did not end there. He secured from the Legislature an act incorporating not only the City of Nauvoo, and the University of the City, but the Nauvoo Legion. This Legion, inspired by a “revelation” from Smith, the City Council was authorized to organize from the inhabitants of the City, who were subject to military law. It was to be at the disposal of the Mayor in executing City laws and ordinances, and of the Governor of the State for the public defence. It embraced three

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classes of troops—artillery, lancers, and riflemen. Its independence of State control was provided by a court-martial of its own officers. Smith was commissioned Lieutenant-General of the Legion by the Governor, and, when the corner-stone of the Temple was laid, it comprised fourteen companies. An army officer, passing through Nauvoo, expressed the opinion that the discipline of the Legion would do honour to any Militia in the States.

The Mormons seemed in fact irresistible. Smith was at the zenith of his power. The population of Nauvoo was almost wholly composed of Mormons, and his sway over the City was almost absolute. The Council and all the officers were practically his nominees, and according to the Eleventh Section of the City Charter, “all power is granted to the City Council to make, ordain, establish and execute all ordinances not repugnant to the constitution of the State.” The attempts of his old enemies, the Missourians, to injure him were fruitless, and when he reviewed the Legion, accompanied by “six ladies on horseback—who were dressed in black velvet, and wore waving plumes of white feathers, and rode up and down in front of the regiment,” his triumph seemed complete. It was perhaps, therefore, natural that he should have a further “revelation.” This one concerned a Mansion House to be built, “ostensibly for the convenience of visitors reaching Nauvoo,” but incidentally for the comfort and convenience
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of the Smith family. The "revelation" ordered the subscription of the capital of a company without any delay whatever to found the House, and "let the House be called the Nauvoo House, and let it be a delightful habitation for man and a resting-place for the weary traveller, that he may contemplate the glory of Zion and the glory of the corner-stone there, and that he may also receive the counsel from those whom I have set to be plants of renown."

The "revelation" gave some direction as to the subscription of the Company's Stock, and excluded "deadheads" and speculators. None of the stock was to be allotted except to believers in the "Book of Mormon." Incidentally, the "revelation" also made friends with Dr. Isaac Gallard, the landowner, who was largely responsible for the Mormons coming to Nauvoo, and who, formerly referred to as "a notorious horse thief and counterfeiter in his early life," was now "commanded to put stock into the House." Robert D. Foster was also ordered to build the house for Joseph Smith, "according to the contract he had made with him," and to "quit grumbling," and various other commands for the future welfare of Zion and the Smiths were given.

Thus Smith reigned, and on the whole the City flourished. But just as adversity brought out the strong qualities of the man, so now his triumph betrayed him. When he faced the mob at Fayette, or led the Army of the Lord, cholera-smitten and panic-stricken, to the relief of their comrades, or when again, after the destruction of the second Zion in Missouri, he still bade his followers have faith, then, indeed, his qualities of unflinching resolution and grim determination redeemed almost the squalid vulgarities of his defects. But now these same qualities proved the man's undoing. Shrewd in deceit he had always been, but in construction he began to fail, and he became headstrong and over-bearing to an intolerable degree. The frequency of his "revelations" became a scandal, so much so that, after immense pressure, he was prevailed upon to agree that "for the future whenever there was a "revelation" to be presented to the Church, he would first present it to the Quorum, and then if it passed the Quorum it should be presented to the Church." There is something deliciously funny in the notion of a man receiving an intimation from on high, and then referring it to his fellows to ascertain if he shall communicate it to them! But fanaticism is not favourable to humour, and it happened that before Smith agreed to this remarkable pronouncement he made just one more "revelation"—the "revelation" that was to bring him to earth at the supreme moment of his power, and to be a stumbling-block to the Mormon faith for decades. Smith "revealed" polygamy and it destroyed him.

It has always been matter for keen dispute...
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what point polygamy crept into the doctrine of the Mormon Church. Hotly has the matter been debated, and clouds of rhetorical dust have risen over the combat. But the facts are very simple. For there was nothing in the "Book of Mormon," or in the doctrine of the Church, that sanctioned polygamy till Smith, "too much at ease in Zion," declared for what he in previous "revelations" and sermons had denounced. True, there had been in Mormonism elements that made in the direction of polygamy. A curious strain of agnosticism—that most potent of heresies—had coloured the views of the Latter Day Saints, the Chosen People, who were called on to rejoice in life and strength under an express sanction that was to exalt them above all other nations of the earth. And in the fellowship of the long forced marches, when the sharp edge of persecution drove them to each other's arms, or again when the wild emotionalism of the revival meetings stirred them to the roots of their being, there had been a strong tendency to that "free-loveism" which is inseparable to all but a staid and ordered community. Some, indeed, of the Mormon Elders, with the Bibliolatry that cemented their faith, had discovered in the habits of the patriarchs a justification for such a sanction as polygamy gave their passions. Over and over again polygamy had been mooted and discussed, and by Smith it had been denounced. But never had it been put forward as a cardinal doctrine of

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the Church until Smith, flushed both with passion and with power, gave out the "revelation" that was to scandalize the whole modern world, and to disrupt his sect. And the final proof of this, as it is the final refutation of those adaptable Mormon apologists, who claim that polygamy was inherent in their doctrine from its inception, is the fact that the man to whom diffidence, hesitancy, finesse even was unknown, who gave out his "revelations" by the hundred and enforced his decrees unalteringly, even this man was moved to speak with bated breath on the matter. For the first time in the history of Mormonism, Smith's "revelation" was a secret one. It was made in the winter of 1843. Not until the conference of Salt Lake City in 1852 was it ever made public. Till then it was given only to those whom Smith knew would accept it, for the Prophet realized that this doctrine of polygamy would strain his hold on the great body of the brethren as nothing before had strained it, and that to make the "revelation" binding on his followers he would have to risk his position. He compromised, and only to the elect, only to the coarser-grained and the most sensual, was the "revelation" permitted.

And as the "revelation" was one that changed vitally the whole character of Mormonism, I set it out in some detail:

"Revelation of the Eternity of the Marriage Covenant, including Plurality of Wives. Given
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through Joseph, the Seer, in Nauvoo, Hancock County, Illinois, July 12th, 1843."

The revelation has sixty-six paragraphs, and
from them I quote the following:—

1. "Verily, thus said the Lord unto you, my
servant Joseph, that inasmuch as you have in-
quired of my hand, to know and understand wherein
I, the Lord, justified my servants, Abraham, Isaac,
and Jacob, as also Moses, David, and Solomon,
my servants, as touching the principle and doctrine
of their having many wives and concubines."

4. "Behold I reveal unto you a new and ever-
lasting covenant, and if ye abide not that covenant,
then ye are damned; for no one can reject this
covenant and be permitted to enter into my glory."

32. "Go ye, therefore, and do the works of Abra-
ham; enter ye into my law and ye shall be saved."

37. "Abraham received concubines, and they
bear him children, and it was accounted unto him
for righteousness, because they were given unto
him, and he abode in my law. . . ."

52. "And let mine handmaid, Emma Smith,
receive all those that have been given unto my
servant, Joseph, and to none else. . . ."

56. "And again, Verily, I say let mine handmaid
forgive my servant, Joseph, his trespasses. . . ."

62. "And if he (any man) have ten Virgins
given unto him by this law he cannot commit
adultery, for they belong to him, and they are given
unto him, therefore he is justified."

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This is the doctrine that the Mormons have
inflicted upon thousands and thousands of girls
and women—young, defenceless, inexperienced,
whose last shilling has been spent in reaching Zion,
and who learn too late that there is no alternative
to polygamy.

"When a woman," says a Mormon writer, "first
learns of the doctrine of the Spiritual Wife she is
thunderstruck, faints, recovers, and refuses. The
Prophet damns her if she rejects. She thinks of
the great sacrifice and of the many thousand miles
she has travelled over sea and land that she might
free her soul from pending ruin, and replies, 'God's
will be done and not mine.'"

This was the indictment which Smith's "revela-
tion" drew out in Nauvoo, under circumstances
that leave no doubt as to its truth. For it came
from a source that could not be successfully
challenged.

In all previous apostasies, whenever his character
had been attacked, Smith's critics had been sum-
marily dealt with. Not so on this occasion, for
they backed their accusation by affidavits, stating
that the Prophet's brother had read the "revela-
tion" concerning polygamy to William Law, and
to the high Council of the Church.

They did more. They published a paper called
the Expositor, which affirmed their belief in the
Church, but denounced Smith. They had sought,
they said, to reform the Church quietly. Joseph
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had spurned them and their pleadings. Now they risked everything—property and life itself in striking their blow at his "tyranny and oppression."

The blow came at a physiological moment—a moment when Smith's hold was weakening on Nauvoo, and when once again his name was becoming a hissing and a reproach. For the story of his amours began to sicken the people of Illinois, and reached the ears of his old enemies—the Missourians, who made repeated efforts to effect his re-arrest. Public excitement became intense, and the stories of Smith's lasciviousness roused indignation throughout the State, and the Expositor published in its first number a terrible attack on the Prophet's character, which blackened it as nothing before had done. Number 2 of the Expositor never appeared. Smith promptly smashed the types, burnt the office, and razed the building to the ground.

The Editor and the seceding Mormons hastened to Carthage, and writs were issued for the arrest of the Mayor of Nauvoo, Joseph Smith, and others who had destroyed the Expositor. Smith's answer was to declare Martial Law, and to put the Nauvoo Legion under arms. Nauvoo was one great military camp, strictly guarded and watched.

But the Governor was resolute on effecting the arrest of Smith, and the Constable and the Guard proceeded. Then for once Smith's nerve failed him. For once he showed the white feather—he fled!

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But his wife, the woman whose affection he had never lost, wrote him in burning words to return, and not to be a "coward shepherd" and leave his flock in danger, and under a solemn pledge from the Governor that he should be tried by the law of the State, and not by lynch law, he returned.

It is doubtful if the pledge was given with sincerity. For when Smith surrendered, and had been bailed on the charge of destroying the Expositor, he was at once re-arrested for treason, for which there is no bail. That night, an armed mob, composed, it is said, of Smith's old Missourian enemies, forced the gaol, blank cartridge being fired on them by the guard. The mob did not use blank cartridge—and they shot Smith and his brother dead.

Smith's death was avenged. Two years later, the lieutenant in charge of the gaol was assassinated by a Mormon in the street. But the best vengeance, and the worst, is that at once Smith's memory became, even to the very Mormons in revolt against him, that of a martyr whose blood is still the seed of their Church.