

Annotated Ezra Booth 1831 Letters

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[Letter 1 - Ezra Booth to Rev. Ira Eddy]

For the Ohio Star.

Nelson, Portage County, Sept. 12th, 1831.

REV. IRA EDDY:

Dear Sir:-- I received your's of the 2d instant and heartily thank you for the favor. It revives afresh in my recollection the scenes of past years, upon the remembrance of which I dwell with a mixture of pleasurable and painful sensation. I arrived at my home on the 1st of the present month, having finished my tour to the west, since which time the scenes and events in the history of my life, for the last few months, have passed in review before my mind.

You are not, it is probable, ignorant of the designs of my most singular and romantic undertaking: suffice to say, it was for the purpose of exploring the promised land -- laying the foundation of the City of Zion, and placing the corner-stone of the Temple of God. A journey of 1000 miles to the west, has taught me far more abundantly, than I should probably have learned from any other source. It has taught me quite beyond my former knowledge, the imbecility of human nature, and especially my own weakness. It has unfolded in its proper character, a delusion to which I had fallen a victim, and taught me the humiliating truth -- that I was exerting the powers both of my mind and body, and sacrificing my time and property to build up a system of delusion, almost unparalleled in the annals of the world.

If God be a God of consistency and wisdom, I now know Mormonism to be a delusion; and this knowledge is built upon the testimony of my senses. In proclaiming it, I am aware I proclaim my own misfortune -- but in doing it, I remove a burden from my mind, and discharge a duty as humbling to myself, as it may be profitable to others. You had heard the story of my wanderings, and "was induced to believe that I had been visited with a species of mental derangement," and therefore, you "had given me up, as one among those friends of early association, who in the lapse of time, would be as though they had not existed." You had concluded that the magic charm of delusion and falsehood, had so wrapped its sable mantle around me, as to exclude the light of truth, and secure me its devoted slave. But, thanks be to God! the spell is dissipated, and the "captive exile hasteneth that he may be loosed, and not die in the pit."

When I embraced Mormonism, I conscientiously believed it to be of God. The impressions of my mind were deep and powerful, and my feelings were exerted to a degree to which I had been a stranger. Like a ghost, it haunted me by night and day, until I was mysteriously hurried, as it were by a kind of necessity, into the vortex of delusion. At times I was much elated; but generally, things in prospect were the greatest stimulants to action.

On our arrival in the western part of the State of Missouri, the place of our destination, we discovered that prophecy and visions had failed, or rather had proved to be false. This fact was so notorious, and the evidence so clear that no one could mistake it -- so much so, that Mr. Rigdon himself said that "Joseph's vision was a bad thing." This was glossed over, apparently, to the satisfaction of most persons present; but not fully to my own. It excited a suspicion that some things were not right, and prepared my mind for the investigation of a variety of circumstances, which occurred during my residence there, and indeed, to review the whole subject from its commencement to that time. My opportunities for a thorough investigation, were far greater than they could have been, had I remained at home; and therefore I do not regret that I made that journey, though I sincerely regret the cause of it. Since my return, I have had several interviews with Messrs. Smith, Rigdon and Cowdrey, and the various shifts and turns, to which they resorted, in order to obviate objections and difficulties, produced in my mind additional evidence, that their's is nothing else than a deeply laid plan of craft and deception.

The relation in which Smith stands to the church, is that of a Prophet, Seer, Revelator and Translator; and when he speaks by the Spirit, or says he knows a thing by the communication of the Spirit, it is received as coming directly from the mouth of the Lord.--When he says he knows a thing to be so, thus it must stand without controversy. A question is agitated between two Elders of the church -- whether or not a bucket of water will become heavier by putting a living fish into it. Much is said by each of the disputants; when at length, Smith decides it in the negative, by saying -- "I know by the Spirit, that it will be no heavier." Any person who chooses, may easily ascertain by actual experiment, whether the Prophet was influenced in this decision, by a true or false Spirit.

It is not my design at this time, to enter into particulars relative to the evidence, upon which my renunciation of Mormonism is founded. This evidence is derived from various sources, and is clear and full, and the conviction which it produces, at least on my mind, is irresistible. You are not aware of the nature of this deception, and the spirit that uniformly attends it; nor can you ever know it, unless you yield to its influence, and by experience learn what it is to fall under its power: "from which my earnest prayer is, that you may ever, ever escape."

There probably never was a plan better suited to lead astray the sinner and the conscientious, when in an unguarded hour they listen to its fatal insinuations. The plan also is so ingeniously contrived, having for its aim one principal point, viz: the establishment of a society in Missouri, over which the contrivers of this delusive system, are to possess the most unlimited and despotic sway. To accomplish this, the Elders of the Church, by commandment given in Missouri, and of which I was both an eye and an ear witness, are to go forth to preach Mormonism to every creature; and now, said Mr. Rigdon -- "The Lord has set us our stint; no matter how soon we perform it -- for when this is done, he will make his second appearance."

I do in sincerity, and I trust in humility, return unfeigned gratitude to the God of infinite mercy, who, in condescension to my weakness, by a peculiar train of providences, brought me to the light, enabled me to see the hidden things of darkness, and delivered me from the snare of the fowler, and from the contagious pestilence which threatened my entire destruction. The scenes of a past few months, are so different from all others in my life, that they are in truth to me "as a dream when one awaketh." Had my fall affected only myself, my reflections would be far less painful than they now are. But to know -- that whatever influence I may have possessed, has been exerted to draw others into a delusion, from which they may not soon be extricated, is to me a source of sorrow and deep regret. They are at this moment the object of my greatest anxiety and commiseration. I crave their forgiveness, and assure them, that they will ever have an interest in my addresses to the throne of grace. It shall be my endeavor to undo as far as possible, what I have done in this case, and also to prevent the spread of a delusion, pernicious in its influence, and destructive in its consequences to the body and soul -- to the present and eternal interests of men.

I am, through restoring mercy and grace, as in former years, though unworthily, yet affectionately your's in Christ. EZRA BOOTH.

(Ohio Star 2 [13 October 1831]:3, Ravenna, Ohio, emphasis omitted)

[Letter 2 - Ezra Booth to Rev. Ira Eddy]

Nelson, Portage Co. Oct. 2, 1831.

REV. & DEAR SIR --

Were there none but myself interested in the exposition of Mormonism, I can assure you my time would be otherwise employed than in writing upon a subject which has heretofore been to me one of deep interest, and at times has occasioned the most painful anxiety of mind. I could wish, if possible, to bury it in oblivion; and to remember it no more for ever. But as this is a thing which cannot be accomplished in a moment, for the sake of others, who may be exposed to the delusion, from which, through the mercy of God, I have been recovered, and others who are at present involved in it; and also in compliance with your request, I will, as far as I have ability, unfold a system of darkness, fraught with glaring absurdity, and as deceptive as falsehood itself.

This system, to some, carries the face of plausibility, and appears under an imposing form. It claims the Bible for its patron, and proffers the restoration of the apostolic church, with all the gifts and graces with which the primitive saints were endowed. It is called the fulness of the Gospel to both Jew and Gentile: and is the test by which every man's faith is to be tried. Judgments are denounced against the sinners of this generation; or in other words, all who reject the book of Mormon, are threatened with eternal damnation. Great promises are made to such as embrace it; signs and wonders are to attend them, such as healing the sick, the blind made to see, the lame to walk, &c.; and they are to receive an everlasting inheritance in "the land of Missouri," where the Savior will make his second appearance -- at which place the foundation of the Temple of God, and the City of Zion, have Recently been laid, and are soon to be built. It is

also to be a city of Refuge, and a safe asylum when the storms of vengeance shall pour upon the earth, and those who reject the book of Mormon, shall be swept off as with the besom of destruction. Then shall the riches of the Gentiles be consecrated to the Mormonites; they shall have lands and cattle in abundance, and shall possess the gold and silver, and all the treasures of their enemies.

The Mormonite preachers go forth, proclaiming repentance and baptism for the remission of sins, and the laying on of hands for the reception of the Holy Ghost. The form of baptism is similar to other orders; only it is prefaced with -- "having authority given me of Jesus Christ;"¹ also, the laying on of hands -- "In the name of Jesus Christ, receive ye the Holy Ghost." Many of them have been ordained to the High Priesthood, or the order of Melchisedec; and profess to be endowed with the same power as the ancient apostles were. But they have been hitherto unsuccessful in finding the lame, the halt, and the blind, who had faith sufficient to become the subjects of their miracles; and it is now concluded that this work must be postponed until they get to the Missouri; for the Lord will not show those signs to this wicked and adulterous generation. In the commandment given to the churches in the state of New-York, to remove to the state of Ohio, they were assured that these miracles should be wrought in the state of Ohio; but now they must be deferred until they are settled in Missouri.

As the Mormonite church depends principally upon the commandments, and as most of them are concealed from the world, it will be necessary to make some statement respecting them. These commandments come from Smith, at such times and on such occasions as he feels disposed to speak, and Rigdon or Cowder[y] to write them. Their exact number I have never taken pains to ascertain. I have in my possession the "27th commandment to Emma my daughter in Zion;" and should presume there are betwixt fifty and a hundred.² They received the addition of five or six while in Missouri; and these are considered a miracle in themselves, sufficient to convince any rational mind. But none but the strong in faith are permitted to witness their origin. I had an opportunity of seeing this wonderful exhibition of the wisdom and power of God, at three different times; and I must say, it bore striking marks of human weakness and wickedness. They are received by the church as divinely inspired, and the name of the Lord is substituted for that of Smith. They are called "The Commandments of the Lord." They are considered "The mysteries of the Kingdom;"³ and to divulge them to the world, is the same as casting pearls before swine. When they and the Scriptures are at variance, the scriptures are wrongly translated; and Smith, though totally ignorant of the original, being a translator or alterator, can easily harmonize them. Every thing in the church is done by commandment; and yet it is said to be done by the voice of the church. For instance, Smith gets a commandment that he shall be the

¹ 1830 BOM, 478; LDS 3 Nephi 11:25; Book of Commandments (BC) 24:53. This was revised in 1835 D&C 2:22, now LDS D&C 20:73 to "Having been commissioned of Jesus Christ." See also H. Michael Marquardt, *The Joseph Smith Revelations: Text and Commentary* (Salt Lake City: Signature Books, 1999), 65.

² Booth's manuscript copy predated the BC manuscript. See BC 26:1; LDS D&C 51:1. This was a guess on the part of Booth. There were about seventy revelations received by Joseph Smith by the time Booth wrote this letter.

³ A revelation given on 9 February 1831 stated, "Thou shalt observe to keep the mysteries of the kingdom unto thyself, for it is not given to the world to know the mysteries" (BC 44:50). On 1 November 1831 in conference it was agreed to publish a selections of Joseph Smith's revelations. An earlier revelation stated, "thou shalt not command him who is at the head, and at the head of the church, for I have given him the keys of the mysteries and the revelations which are sealed, until I shall appoint unto them another in his stead" (BC 30:6; LDS D&C 28:6-7, [5-26] September 1830).

"head of the Church," or that he "shall rule the Conference,"⁴ or that the Church shall build him an elegant house, and give him 1000 dollars.⁵ For this the members of the church must vote, or they will be cast off for rebelling against the commandments of the Lord. In addition to the book of Mormon, and the Commandments, there are Revelations which are not written. In this department, though Smith is the principal, yet there are others who profess to receive revelations; but after all, Smith is to decide whether they come from the Lord or the devil. Some have been so unfortunate as to have their revelations palmed upon the latter. These revelations entirely supercede the Bible, and in fact, the Bible is declared too defective to be trusted in its present form; and it is designed that it shall undergo a thorough alteration, or as they say, translation. This work is now in operation. The Gospel by St. Matthew has already received the purifying touch, and is prepared for the use of the church.⁶ It was intended to have kept this work a profound secret, and strict commandments were given for that purpose; and even the salvation of the church was said to depend upon it.⁷ The secret is divulged, but the penalty is not as yet inflicted. Their revelations are said to be an addition to the Bible. But instead of being an addition, they destroy its use; for every thing which need be known, whether present, past or future, they can learn from Smith, for he has declared to the church, that he "knows all things that will take place from this time unto the end of the world." If then, placing the Bible under circumstances which render it entirely useless, is infidelity, Mormonism is infidelity.

Joseph Smith, Jun., Sidney Rigdon, Oliver Cowdrey, and Martin Harris, may be considered as the principals in this work; and let Martin Harris tell the story, and he is the most conspicuous of the four. -- He informed me, that he went to the place where Joseph resided, and Joseph had given it up, on account of the opposition of his wife and others: but he told Joseph. "I have not come down here for nothing, and we will go on with it." Martin Harris is what may be called a great talker, and an extravagant boaster; so much so, that he renders himself disagreeable to many of his society. The money he has expended, and the great things he has done, form a considerable topic of his conversation; he understands all prophecies, and knows every thing by the spirit, and he can silence almost any opposer by talking faster, and louder than he can: or by telling him, "I know every thing and you know nothing: I am a wise man and you are a fool;" and in this respect, he stands a fair sample of many others in the church. Yours affectionately,

E. BOOTH.

REV. I. EDDY.

⁴ BC 30:10 has "my servant Joseph shall be appointed to rule the conference by the voice of it." The word "rule" was changed to "preside over" in 1835 D&C 51:4; LDS D&C 28:10.

⁵ On 4 February 1831 revelation instructed, "it is meet that my servant Joseph should have a house built, in which to live and translate" the KJV Bible (BC 43:9; LDS D&C 41:7). There is no mention of \$1,000 dollars in the BC text.

⁶ Joseph Smith's revision of Matthew commenced on 8 March 1831 and 26 of the 28 chapters were revised before Smith left in June on his first trip to Missouri.

⁷ The 9 February 1831 revelation included "for thy salvation thou shalt hold thy peace concerning them" (Marquardt, *Joseph Smith Revelations*, 109). Later at a conference held on 25 October 1831 Joseph Smith said "except the church receive the fulness of the Scriptures that they would yet fall" (Donald Q. Cannon and Lyndon W. Cook, eds., *Far West Record: Minutes of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, 1830-1844* [Salt Lake City: Deseret Book Co., 1983], 23). The phrase "fulness of the Scriptures" refers to Joseph Smith's Bible revision.

(Ohio Star 2 [20 October 1831]:3, Ravenna, Ohio, emphasis omitted)

[Letter 3 - Ezra Booth to Rev. Ira Eddy]

Nelson, Portage Co. Oct. 24, 1831.

REV. & DEAR SIR --

Mormonism has in part changed its character, and assumed a different dress, from that under which it made its first appearance on the Western Reserve. Many extraordinary circumstances which then existed, have vanished out of sight; and the Mormonites desire, not only to forget them, but wish them blotted out of the memory of others. Those wonders, which they wish to have forgotten, stand as the principal foundation of the faith of several hundred of the members of their church.

With the Wonders of Mormonism, or some of them, I design to occupy your attention in this letter; and I wish you to observe here, and hereafter remember, that the evidence by which all my statements are supported, is derived from my own experience and observation, or from testimony of persons, who still adhere to Mormonism; and I hold myself responsible to any tribunal, whether on Earth or in Heaven, for the truth of what I write, or at least, for an intention to write the truth, and nothing but the truth.

"Being carried away in the spirit" and "I know it to be so by the spirit," are well known phrases, and in common use in the Mormonite church. We will first notice the gift of tongues, exercised by some when carried away in the spirit. These persons were apparently lost to all surrounding circumstances, and wrapt up in the contemplation of things, and in communicating with persons not present. -- They articulated sounds, which but few present professed to understand; and those few, declared them to be the Indian language. A merchant, who had formerly been a member of the Methodist society, observed, he had formerly traded with the Indians, and he knew it to be their dialect. Being myself present on some of these occasions, a person proffered his services as my interpreter, and translated these sounds, which to me were unintelligible, into English language. One individual could read any chapter of the Old or New-Testament, in several different languages. This was known to be the case by a person who professed to understand those languages. In the midst of this delirium, they would, at times, fancy themselves addressing a congregation of their red brethren; and mounted upon a stump, or the fence, or from some elevated situation, would harangue their assembly, until they had convinced and converted them. They would then lead them into the water, and baptize them, and pronounce their sins forgiven. In this exercise, some of them actually went into the water; and in the water, performed the ceremony used in baptizing. These actors assumed the visage of the savage, and so nearly imitated him, not only in language, but in gestures and actions, that it seemed the soul and body were completely metamorphosed into the Indian. No doubt was then entertained but that this was an extraordinary work of the Lord, designed to prepare those young men for the Indian mission; and many who are still leaders of the church, could say, "we know by the spirit that it is the work of the Lord." And now they can say, "we know by the spirit that it was it is the work of the Devil." Most of those who were the principal actors, have since apostatized, and the work is unanimously discarded by the church. The limits, which my want of

time to write, as well as your want of patience to read, compel me to prescribe for myself, will allow me only to touch on some of the most prominent parts of this newly-invented, and heterogeneous system.

A new method for obtaining authority to preach the Gospel was introduced into the church. One declared he had received a commission, directly from Heeven [Heaven], written upon parchment. Another, that it was written upon the palm of his hand, and upon the lid of his Bible, &c. Three witnesses, and they were formerly considered persons of veracity, testified, that they saw the parchment, or something like it, when put into the hands of the candidate. These commissions, when transcribed upon a piece of paper, were read to the church, and the persons who had received them, were ordained to the Elder's office, and sent out into the world to preach. But this also sunk into discredit, and experienced the fate of the former.

Visions, also, were in high credit, and sounded abroad as an infallible testimony in favor of Mormonism. The visionary, at times, imagined he saw the City of New Jerusalem; unlocked its gate, and entered within the walls; passed through its various apartments, and then returned, locked the gate, and put the key into his pocket. When this tour was finished, he would entertain his admiring friends, with a detailed description of the Heavenly City.

The condition of the ten tribes of Israel since their captivity, unto the present time, has excited considerable anxiety, and given rise to much speculation among the learned. But after all the researches which have been made, the place of their residence has never been satisfactorily ascertained. But these visionaries have discovered their place of residence to be contiguous to the north pole; separated from the rest of the world by impassable mountains of ice and snow. In this sequestered residence, they enjoy the society of Elijah the Prophet, and John the Revelator, and perhaps the three immortalized Nephites. -- By and by, the mountains of ice and snow are to give way, and open a passage for the return of these tribes, to the land of Palestine.⁸

About this time, the ministration of angels was supposed to be frequent in the church. The Heavenly visitants made their appearance to certain individuals: they seldom made any communication, but presented themselves as spectacles for the beholder to gaze upon, with silent admiration.

Smith is the only one at present, to my knowledge, who pretends to hold converse with the inhabitants of the celestial world. It seems from his statements, that he can have access to

⁸ Concerning "the mountains of ice and snow" to give away from the "north pole" or north of Ohio. A revelation given after Booth's 24 October 1831 letter, which reflects beliefs in the church. The text says, "And they who are in the north countries shall come in remembrance before the Lord, and their prophets shall hear his voice, and shall no longer stay themselves, and they shall smite the rocks, and the ice shall flow down at their presence" (*Joseph Smith Revelations*, 174; LDS D&C 133:26, 3 November 1831, Hiram, Ohio).

At the 3 June 1831 conference Levi Hancock reported that Joseph Smith said "John was to tarry until Christ came. He is now with the ten tribes preaching to them and when we can get ready for them they will come" (*The Life of Levi Hancock*, typed copy, original in LDS archives). See also Bruce N. Westergren, ed., *From Historian to Dissident: The Book of John Whitmer* (Salt Lake City: Signature Books, 1995), 69.

them, when and where he pleases. He does not pretend that he sees them with his natural, but with his spiritual, eyes; and he says he can see them as well with his eyes shut, as with them open. So also in translating. -- The subject stands before his eyes in print, but it matters not whether his eyes are open or shut; he can see as well one way as the other.

You have probably read the testimony of the three witnesses appended to the Book of Mormon. These witnesses testify, that an angel appeared to them, and presented them the golden plates, and the voice of God declared it to be a Divine Record. To this they frequently testify, in the presence of large congregations. When in Missouri, I had an opportunity to examine a commandment given to these witnesses, previous to their seeing the plates.⁹ They were informed that they should see and hear these things by faith, and then they should testify to the world, as though they had seen and heard, as I see a man, and hear his voice: but after all, it amounts simply to this; that by faith or imagination, they saw the plates and the angel, and by faith or imagination, they heard the voice of the Lord.

Smith describes an angel, as having the appearance of "a tall, slim, well built, handsome man, with a bright pillar upon his head." The Devil once, he says, appeared to him in the same form, excepting upon his head he had a "black pillar," and by this mark, he was able to distinguish him from the former.

It passes for a current fact in the Mormonite church, that there are immense treasures in the earth, especially in those places in the State of N. Y. from whence many of the Mormonites emigrated last spring: and when they become sufficiently purified, these treasures are to be poured into the lap of their church; and then, to use their own language, they are to be the richest people in the world.¹⁰ These treasures were discovered several years since, by means of the dark glass, the same with which Smith says he translated most of the Book of Mormon. -- Several of those persons, together with Smith, who were formerly unsuccessfully engaged in digging and searching for these treasures, now reside in this county, and from themselves I received this information. Yours, affectionately,

EZRA BOOTH.

REV. I. EDDY

(Ohio Star 2 [27 October 1831]:3, Ravenna, Ohio, emphasis omitted)

[Letter 4 - Ezra Booth to Rev. Ira Eddy]

Nelson, Portage Co. Oct. 31, 1831.

REV. & DEAR SIR --

From the time that Mormonism first made its appearance upon the stage, until the grand tour to the Missouri, an expectation universally pervaded the Church, that the time was not far

⁹ Not published in the BC. The revelation was first published in the 1835 D&C and was "given previous to their viewing the plates containing the Book of Mormon" (1835 D&C 42; LDS D&C 17, [14-30] June 1829).

¹⁰ On hidden treasures see 1830 BOM, 443; LDS Helaman 13:18 and 1830 BOM, 520; LDS Mormon 1:18.

distant, when the deaf, the dumb, the maimed, the blind, &c. would become the subjects of the miraculous power of God, so that every defect in their systems would be entirely removed.

This expectation originated from, and was grounded upon a variety of premises, included in a number of commandments, or verbal revelations from Smith, or, as he is styled "the head of the Church." As the 4th of June last,¹¹ was appointed for the sessions of the conference, it was ascertained, that that was the time specified, when the great and mighty work was to commence, and such was the confidence of some, that knowledge superceded their faith, and they did not hesitate to declare themselves perfectly assured, that the work of miracles would commence at the ensuing conference. With such strong assurances, and with the most elevated expectations, the conference assembled at the time appointed. To give, if possible, additional energy to expectation, Smith, the day previous to the conference, professing to be filled with the spirit of Prophecy, declared, that "not three days should pass away, before some should see their Savior, face to face." Soon after the session commenced, Smith arose to harangue the conference. He reminded those present of the Prophecy, which he said "was given by the spirit yesterday." He wished them not to be overcome with surprise, when that event ushered in. He continued until by long speaking, himself and some others became much excited. He then laid his hands on the head of Elder Wite [Wight],¹² who had participated largely in the warm feeling of his leader, and ordained him to the High Priesthood. He was set apart for the service of the Indians, and was ordained to the gift of tongues, healing the sick, casting out Devils, and discerning spirits; and in like manner he ordained several others; and then called upon Wite [Wight] to take the floor. Wite [Wight] arose, and presented a pale countenance, a fierce look, with his arms extended, and his hands cramped backward, the whole system agitated, and a very unpleasant object to gaze upon. He exhibited himself as an instance of the great power of God, and called upon those around him, "if you want to see a sign, look at me." He then step [stepped] upon a bench, and declared, with a loud voice, he saw the Savior: and thereby, for the time being, rescued Smith's prophecy from merited contempt. -- It, however, procured Wite [Wight] the authority to ordain the rest. So said the spirit, and so said Smith. The spirit in Smith selected those to be ordained, and the spirit in Wite [Wight] ordained them. But the spirit in Wite [Wight] proved an erring, and forgetful dictator; so much so, that some of the candidates felt the weight of his hands thrice, before the work was rightly done. Another Elder,¹³ who had been ordained to the same office as Wite [Wight], at the bidding of Smith step [stepped] upon the floor. Then ensued a scene, of which you can form no adequate conception; and which, I would forbear relating, did not the truth require it. This Elder moved upon the floor, his legs inclining to a bend; one shoulder elevated above the other, upon which the head seemed disposed to recline, his arms partly extended; his hands partly half clenched; his mouth half open, and contracted in the shape of an italic O; his eyes assumed a wild and ferocious cast, and his whole appearance presented a frightful object to the view of the beholder. "Speak, Brother Harvey" said Smith. But Harvey intimated by signs,

¹¹ The conference where the high priesthood was given to church elders was held on 3 June 1831. Other meetings were held with those who remained in Kirtland for the next few days.

¹² Lyman Wight wrote in his autobiography, "here for the *first time* I saw the Melchisedec priesthood introduced into the Church of Jesus Christ, as anciently, whereunto I was ordained under the hands of Joseph Smith, and then ordained sixteen others, such as he chose, unto the same priesthood" (as cited in Joseph Smith III and Heman Smith, eds., *The History of the Reorganized Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints* [Lamoni, Iowa: Herald House, 1897], 1:193).

¹³ The elder was Harvey Whitlock.

that his power of articulation was in a state of suspense, and that he was unable to speak. Some conjectured that Harvey was possessed of the Devil, but Smith said, "The Lord binds in order to set at liberty." After different opinions had been given, and there had been much confusion, Smith learnt by the spirit, that Harvey was under a diabolical influence, and that Satan had bound him; and he commanded the unclean spirit to come out of him.

It now became clearly manifest, that "the man of sin was revealed," for the express purpose that the Elders should become acquainted with the devices of Satan; and after that they would possess knowledge sufficient to manage him. This, Smith declared to be a miracle, and his success in this case, encouraged him to work other, and different miracles. Taking the hand of one of the Elders in his own, a hand, which by accident had been rendered defective, he said, "Brother Mordock [Murdock], I command you in the name of Jesus Christ, to straighten your hand;" in the mean while, endeavoring to accomplish the work by using his own hand, to open the hand of the other. The effort proved unsuccessful; but he again articulated the same commandment, in a more authoritative and louder tone of voice; and while uttering with his tongue, his hands were at work; but after all the exertion of his power, both natural and supernatural, the deficient hand returned to its former position, where it still remains. But ill success in this case, did not discourage him from undertaking another. One of the Elders, who was decrepid [decrepit] in one of his legs, was set upon the floor, and commanded, in the name of Jesus Christ, to walk. He walked a step or two, his faith failed, and he was again compelled to have recourse to his former assistant, and he has had occasion to use it ever since.

A dead body, which had been retained above ground two or three days, under the expectation that the dead would be raised, was insensible to the voice of those who commanded it to wake into life, and is destined to sleep in the grave, till the last trump shall sound, and the power of God easily accomplish the work, which frustrated the attempts, and bid defiance to the puny efforts of the Mormonites.

Under these discouraging circumstances, the horizon of Mormonism gathered darkness; and a storm seemed to hang impending over the church. The gloom of disappointed expectation, overspread the countenances of many, while they labored to investigate the cause of this failure. To add, if possible, to their mortification, a larger assembly collected on the Sabbath, in order to hear preaching. In the midst of the meeting, the congregation was dismissed by Rigdon, and the people sent to their homes. He was directed to do this, he said, by the spirit. But it was generally believed, that he was directed solely by fear; and that he had mistaken the spirit of cowardice, for the spirit of the Lord. Several of the Elders said that they "felt the spirit to preach" to the congregation: and Rigdon felt the spirit to send the people home: such was the unity, which then prevailed among them.

You will doubtless say, can it be possible that the minds of men, and men who possess the appearance of honesty, can be so strangely infatuated, as still to adhere to a system, after it had occasioned so much agitation, and so much disappointment. One reason which can be assigned for this, is, the adherents are generally inclined to consider the system so perfect, as to admit of no suspicion; and the confusion, and disappointment, are attributed to some other cause. Another, and principal reason is, delusion always effects the mind with a species of delirium, and this delirium arises in a degree, proportionate to the magnitude of the delusion. These men, upon

other subjects, will converse like other men: but when their favorite system is brought into view, its inconsistencies and contradictions, are resolved into inexplicable mystery; and this will not only apply to the delusions now under consideration, but in my view, to every delusion from the highest to the lowest; and it matters not whether it carries the stamp of popularity, or its opposite. Yours, affectionately,

EZRA BOOTH.

REV. I. EDDY

(Ohio Star 2 [3 November 1831]:3, Ravenna, Ohio, emphasis omitted)

[Letter 5 - Ezra Booth to Rev. Ira Eddy]

Nelson, Portage Co. Nov. 7, 1831.

REV. & DEAR SIR --

In my last letter I gave you a faint representation of the event which transpired, and the circumstances which attended the meeting of the Mormonite Conference. Though many stumbled, yet none irrecoverably fell. Another grand object was presented, and the attention was somewhat diverted from those scenes of disappointment, through which we had recently passed. The tour to Missouri revived the sinking expectations, and gave new energy to faith and hope. In that distant region, anticipation was to be realized in full, and the objects of faith, and hope, were to become the objects of knowledge and fruition. A commandment was received, and Elders were directed to take their journey for the "promised land." They were commanded to go two by two, with the exception of Smith, Rigdon, Harris, and Partridge;¹⁴ and it was designed that these should find an easier method of transporting themselves, than to travel that distance on foot. They were careful to make suitable provision for themselves, both in money and other articles, that while on their journey, they might carry the appearance of gentlemen filling some important stations in life: while many, who were destined to travel on foot with packs upon their backs, were so fired with the ardor of enthusiasm, that they supposed they could travel to Missouri, with but little or no money. These carried the appearance, and were justly entitled to the character of beggars, for when the little money they took with them was expended, they subsisted by begging, until they arrived to their journey's end.

Being myself one of the number selected to perform the journey by land, and not being much accustomed to travel on foot, I hesitated for a while; but believing it to be the will of God, I resolved on an unreserved surrender of myself to the work, and on the 15th of June, in company with the one appointed to travel with me, took up my line of march for Missouri.¹⁵ I do not design to trouble you with a relation of particulars, but will observe, that after I left the north part of the State of Ohio, I made a speedy and a prosperous journey to Missouri. I preached twice in Ohio, thrice in Indiana, once in Illinois, and once in Missouri. We were commanded to preach by

¹⁴ The revelation of 6 June 1831 instructed the elders to travel to the state of Missouri and that Bishop Edward Partridge and Martin Harris were to take their journey with Sidney Rigdon and Joseph Smith (BC 54:24; LDS D&C 52:24).

¹⁵ Elders Isaac Morley and Ezra Booth were instructed to go together and preach the gospel as they went to Missouri (BC 54:23; LDS D&C 52:23). Booth says they left on 15 June 1831.

the spirit, and my impressions were, that farther to the westward, I should enjoy more of the spirit's influence; and though I travelled one thousand miles to the west, my anticipations, in this respect, were never realized. I seldom ever proclaimed Mormonism with that liberty, which I enjoyed in my public exercises, while a member of the Methodist Episcopal Church. I supposed that at some future time, the spirit would endow me with the power to preach with an unusual degree of liberty. That period has never arrived, and I am persuaded it never will, and I now sincerely desire the spirit of truth to direct my pen, while I endeavor to expose the errors and absurdities of the system I then advocated.

When we arrived at the place to which our mission destined us, we perceived, to our mortification, that disappointment, instead of being confined to the State of Ohio, had journeyed thither, and had arrived before us. We would gladly here have avoided an interview with this, our old companion; but this was impossible, she met us, and stared us in the face which way soever we turned, nor was it possible to look her out of countenance, or put the blush upon her pallid features, or expel her from our society. Some were for making the best of her they could; but for myself, I resolved that she should be expelled, or at any rate, that her visits should be less frequent, or I would abandon the habitation entirely.

When we commenced our journey for Missouri, we expected an "effectual door" would be opened, to proclaim the new system of faith, in that region; and that those who were ordained to the gift of tongues, would have an opportunity to display their supernatural talent, in communicating to the Indians, in their own dialect. Some who were ordained to this office, absolutely knew that through this medium, they should gain access to the Natives, and I will venture to say, I know, that their success will be similar to that of their predecessor, Oliver Cowdrey, who stated that he was endowed with the same foreknowledge. But the event has proved his presumption false. For more than two weeks, while I remained there, the disposition of the Elders appeared to be averse to preaching, either to the white or red people, and indeed, adverse circumstances prevented it.

We expected to assemble together in conference, according to commandment,¹⁶ and the Lord would signally display his power, for the confirmation of our faith; but we commenced our journey home, before most of the Elders arrived. It is true, a conference was held, but it was considered so unimportant, that myself and another man were permitted to be absent, for the purpose of procuring the means of conveyance down the river. We expected to find a large Church, which Smith said, was revealed to him in a vision, Oliver had raised up there. This large Church was found to consist of three or four females.

We expected to witness the exercise of those miraculous gifts, to which some were ordained while in the State of Ohio. But the same difficulty, the same want of faith among the people, which counteracted them here, prevailed there; consequently, no miracles could be wrought. We expected to see the foundation of the City and Temple laid; and this we were permitted to see, and it was in fact a curiosity, but not worth going to Missouri to witness. The honor of consecrating the land, &c. was conferred on Mr. Rigdon. The commandment reads thus:

¹⁶ The commandment to hold a conference was given on 6 June 1831 with the church conference held in Kaw Township, Jackson County on 4 August 1831 (Cannon and Cook, *Far West Record*, 9-10).

"let my servant Sidney consecrate and dedicate the land, and the spot for the Temple"¹⁷ -- again, "Behold I give unto my servant Sidney a commandment, that he shall write a description of the land of Zion, and a statement of the will of God, as it shall be made known to him by the spirit, and a subscription to be presented to the Churches, to obtain money to purchase lands, for an inheritance for the children of God: for behold the Lord willeth that his Disciples, and the children of men should open their hearts, to purchase this whole region of country, lest they receive none inheritance, save it be by the shedding of blood."¹⁸ The childish exultation of the Mormonite leaders, while they echoed and re-echoed, "the Lord has given us this whole region of country;" "this whole region of country is ours;" when it was manifest, agreeable to the commandment, that the gift was only to be obtained, by purchasing it with money at a dear rate, and that, in order to save themselves the trouble of "the shedding of blood," would, under other circumstances, have been truly diverting. But when viewing it as an instance of a deep-laid scheme, and the cunning artifice of crafty impostors, designed to allure the credulous and the unsuspecting, into a state of unqualified vassalage, it presented a melancholy picture of the direful depravity of the human heart, while destitute of those virtues, inculcated in the Gospel of the blessed Redeemer.

It was conjectured by the inhabitants of Jackson County, that the Mormonites, as a body are wealthy, and many of them entertain fears, that next December, when the list of the land is exposed for sale, they will out-bid others, and establish themselves as the most powerful body in the County. But they may dismiss their fears in this respect; for the Mormonites as a body, are comparatively poor, and destined so to remain, until they pursue a different course as it relates to economy and industry, from what they have hitherto pursued. There were ten families, which came by water, landed there the day on which I arrived; and all the land which the Bishop said they had means to purchase, was less than thirty acres to the family; and thirty acres in that country, is little enough for wood and timber land; as fifteen acres upon an average here, are worth thirty there. Neither need they fear that the Mormonites, were they so disposed, will obtain the possession of their lands "by shedding of blood," until the spirit selects more courageous leaders than Smith and Rigdon.

Yours affectionately,

EZRA BOOTH.

REV. I. EDDY.

(Ohio Star 2 [10 November 1831]:3, Ravenna, Ohio, emphasis omitted)

[Letter 6 - Ezra Booth to Rev. Ira Eddy]

Nelson, Portage Co. Nov. 14, 1831.

REV. & DEAR SIR --

It is well known that the ostensible design of the Mormonites in settling in the western

¹⁷ See BC 59:70; LDS D&C 58:57, [1-2] August 1831.

¹⁸ See BC 59:63-65; LDS D&C 58:50-53.

part of Missouri, is to convert the Indians to the faith of Mormonism. In this, the leaders appear to have in view, as a mode, the Jesuits of the 16th century, who established themselves in South America, by gaining an entire ascendancy over the hearts and consciences of the natives, and thereby became their masters. As Independence is the place of general rendezvous, and head-quarters of the Mormonites, it may not be amiss to notice it. It is a new Town, containing a courthouse built of brick, two or three merchant stores, and fifteen or twenty dwelling houses, built mostly of logs hewed on both sides; and is situated on a handsome rise of ground, about three miles south of the Missouri river, and about twelve miles east of the dividing line between the U. S. and the Indian Reserve, and is the County seat of Jackson County. In this place, it is designed to establish the Lord's printing press, of which Wm. W. Phelps and O. Cowdery, are to have the management; and also, the Lord's storehouse, committed in charge to S. Gilbert. By the means of these two grand engines, they expect to make the wicked feel the weight of their tremendous power. West of the line lies the territory, selected by the Government of the U. S. for the future residence of the Indians; to which place, a number of tribes have recently emigrated. The question is frequently asked, do the Indians seem disposed to receive Mormonism; or have any of them as yet embraced it? To which question, I have heard some of the leaders reply, "O yes," when the truth is, not an individual had embraced it when I left that place, nor is there any prospect they will embrace it. It is true, that some of the Indians appear to listen with a degree of attention, while the Mormonite teacher pretends to disclose to them the secrets of their origin, the history of their ancestors, and that the Great Spirit designs, in this generation, to restore them to the possession of their lands, now occupied by the whites; and the Indians shall go forth among the white people, "as a lion among the beasts of the forests, and as a young lion, among the flocks of sheep, who, if he goeth through, both treadeth down and teareth to pieces, and no man can deliver. Thy hand shall be lifted upon their adversaries, (the whites,) and all their enemies (the whites) shall be cut off."¹⁹ Here you have a fair specimen of the method adopted in the Book of Mormon, and preached by the Mormonite teachers, for the purpose of enlisting the feelings, and ingratiating themselves with the Indians; and should success attend their endeavors; and the minds of the Indians become inflamed with that enthusiastic spirit which Mormonism inspires, they may be inclined to try the experiment, whether "by the shedding of blood," they can expel the white inhabitants, or reduce them to a state of servitude; and by this means, regain the possession of the lands occupied by their forefathers.

The laying of the foundation of Zion was attended with considerable parade, and an ostentatious display of talents, both by Rigdon and Cowdery.²⁰ The place being designated as the site where the city was to commence, on the day appointed we repaired to the spot, not only as spectators, but each one to act the part assigned him in the great work of laying the foundation of the "glorious City of the New-Jerusalem." Rigdon consecrated the ground, by an address in the first place to the God whom the Mormons profess to worship; and then making some remarks respecting the extraordinary purpose for which we were assembled, prepared the way for administering the oath of allegiance, to those who, were then to receive their "everlasting inheritance" in that City. He laid them under the most solemn obligations, to constantly obey all

¹⁹ 1830 BOM, 500; LDS 3 Nephi 21:12-13, based upon Micah 5:8-9. See also 1830 BOM, 497; LDS 3 Nephi 20:16-17.

²⁰ The land was consecrated and dedicated as an inheritance for the Saints by Sidney Rigdon on 2 August 1831. This occurred in Kaw Township about twelve miles west of Independence. The first logs were laid for the foundation of the city of Zion.

the commandments of Smith.²¹ He enjoined it upon them to express a great degree of gratitude for the free donation, and then, as the Lord's Vicegerent, he gratuitously bestowed upon them, that for which they had paid an exorbitant price in money. These preliminaries being ended, a shrub oak, about ten inches in diameter at the butt, the best that could be obtained near at hand, was prostrated, trimmed, and cut off at a suitable length; and twelve men answering to the twelve Apostles, by means of handspikes, conveyed it to the place. Cowdery craved the privilege of laying the corner-stone. He selected a small rough stone, the best he could find, carried it in one hand to the spot, removed the surface of the earth to prepare a place for its reception, and then displayed his oratorical power, in delivering an address, suited to the important occasion. The stone being placed, one end of the shrub oak stick was laid upon it; and there was laid down the first stone and stick, which are to form an essential part of the splendid City of Zion.

The next day the ground for the Temple was consecrated, and Smith claimed the honor of laying the corner-stone himself.²² Should the inhabitants of Independence, feel a desire to visit this place, destined at some future time to become celebrated, they will have only to walk one half of a mile out of the Town, to a rise of ground, a short distance south of the road. They will be able to ascertain the spot, by the means of a sappling [sapling], distinguished from others by the bark being taken off on the north and on the east side. -- On the south side of the sappling [sapling] will be found the letter, T, which stands for Temple; and on the east side ZOM for Zomar; which Smith says is the original word for Zion.²³ Near the foot of the sappling [sapling], they will find a small stone, covered over with bushes, which were cut for that purpose. This is the corner-stone for the Temple. They can there have the privilege of beholding the mighty work, accomplished by about thirty men, who left their homes, traveled 1000 miles, most of them on foot, and expended more than one thousand dollars in cash.

Having completed the work, or rather, finding but little or no business for us to accomplish in Missouri, most of us became anxious to return home. And none appeared to be more so than Smith and Rigdon, whose plans for future subsistence were considerably frustrated. They expected to find a country abounding with the necessaries and comforts of life. But the prospect appeared somewhat gloomy, and will probably remain so for years to come. That they were disappointed, is evident from the change which appeared in their calculations. Before they went to Missouri, their language was, "we shall winter in Ohio but one winter more;" and when in Missouri, "it will be many years before we come here for the Lord has a great work for us to do in Ohio,"²⁴ and the great work is, to make a thorough alteration of the Bible, and invent new revelations, and these are to be sent to Missouri, in order to be printed.²⁵ This economy to save

²¹ Oliver Cowdery wrote, "Brother Sidn[e]y Rigdon stood up and asked saying: Do you receive this land for the land of your inheritance with thankful hearts from the Lord? answer from all[:] we do. Do you pledge yourselves to keep the laws of God on this land, which you have never have kept in your own land? We do. Do you pledge yourselves to see that others of your brethren, who shall come hither do keep the laws of God? We do" (Westergren, *From Historian to Dissident*), 86.

²² Joseph Smith laid the cornerstone at the north east corner of the proposed temple on 3 August 1831.

²³ That Joseph Smith considered "Zomar" to be Zion see "Grammar & A[l]phabet of the Egyptian Language," 23, original in LDS archives, 1835 manuscript in H. Michael Marquardt, comp., *The Joseph Smith Egyptian Papers* (Cullman, Alabama: Printing Service, 1981), 49-50.

²⁴ A revelation given after Rigdon and Smith returned to Ohio expressed, "I the Lord willeth to retain a strong hold in the land of Kirtland, for the space of five years, in the which I will not overthrow the wicked" (BC 65:27; LDS D&C 64:21, 11 September 1831).

²⁵ This letter of 14 November 1831 was written after a series of conferences were held at Hiram, Ohio where it

the expense of postage, is parallel with their other calculations. But no matter for that, it will save them the difficulties and hardships incident to settling a new country; and also the dangers to which they would be exposed, in case the Indians should commence hostilities upon the whites; and moreover, they have an easy method to supply themselves with cash at any time when occasion requires. The authority of a commandment, will easily untie the purse-strings, of those whose consciences are under their control; and they find it much easier, and better suited to their dispositions, to write commandments, than to gain a livelihood by the sweat of their brow; and indeed, Smith has commanded himself not to labor, and by his mandate, has enjoined it upon the Church to support him. The Bishop, when we were in Missouri, intimated, that he and others were too much inclined to indolence. He replied, "I am commanded not to labor."²⁶

Yours affectionately,

EZRA BOOTH.

REV. I. EDDY.

(Ohio Star 2 [17 November 1831]:3, Ravenna, Ohio, emphasis omitted)

[Letter 7 - Ezra Booth to Rev. Ira Eddy]

Nelson, Portage Co. Nov. 21, 1831.

REV. & DEAR SIR --

The following, with but a little variation, is the copy of a letter which was written to the Bishop of the Mormonite Church, who, by commandment, has received his station, and now resides in Missouri.²⁷ His business is to superintend the secular concerns of the Church. He holds a deed of the lands, and the members receive a writing from him, signifying, that they are to possess and occupy the land as their own, so long as they are obedient to Smith's commandments. The Bishop is, in reality, the Vice-gerent of Smith, and those in collusion with him; and holds his office during their will and pleasure. I think him to be an honest man as yet, but there is a point beyond which he cannot go, unless he prostrates his honor as in the dust, and prostitutes his conscience to the vilest of purposes. He has frequently staggered and been ready to fall. The Conference last year gave him a tremendous shock, from which, with difficulty, he recovered. The law of the Church enjoins, that no debts with the world shall be contracted.²⁸ But a thousand acres of land in the town of Thompson, could be purchased for one half its value, and he was commanded to secure it; and in order to do it, he was under the necessity to contract a debt to the world, to the amount of several hundred dollars. He hesitated, but the command was repeated, "you must secure the land." He was one of the number, who was ordained to the gift of discerning spirits; and in a commandment,²⁹ a pattern was given by which the good spirit might

was determined to publish the revelations of Joseph Smith. See Cannon and Cook, *Far West Record*, 26-32.

²⁶ In a revelation given in July 1830 Smith was told, "in temporal labors thou shalt not have strength, for this is not thy calling" (BC 25:14; LDS D&C 24:9).

²⁷ Edward Partridge was 37 years old when he was appointed the first church bishop on 4 February 1831 being ordained by Sidney Rigdon (BC 43:11-12; LDS D&C 41:9-11).

²⁸ The church law stated concerning dealings with the world, "Thou shalt not contract any debts with them" (Marquardt, *Joseph Smith Revelations*, 110, 115). See also BC 44:55 with the added words "except thou art commanded." Omitted in 1835 D&C 13 and LDS D&C 42.

²⁹ See BC 54:14, 18-19; LDS D&C 52:14, 18-19, 6 June 1831; also BC 49:23; LDS D&C 46:27, 8 March 1831.

be distinguished from the bad, which rendered the gift of spiritual discernment useless: for the division was to be made from external appearances, and not from any thing discovered internally. – He saw the impropriety and it shook his faith. I am suspicious that the time is not far distant, when, by commandment, this office will be bestowed upon a more trusty and confidential person; perhaps Smith's brother or father, or some one who has been disciplined in the State of New-York. Then it will become his business, to make over the property, by deed of conveyance, to the person appointed by the commandment to supercede him. The Mormonites will tell you, that business of this nature is done by the voice of the Church. It is like this: a Sovereign issues his decrees, and then says to his subjects, hold up your right hands, in favor of my decrees being carried into effect. Should any refuse, they are sure to be hung for rebellion.

SEPT. 20, 1831.

MR. PARTRIDGE --

Sir: -- From a sense of duty, I take up my pen, to communicate to you the present impressions of my mind, which originated from facts, which occurred during my stay there, and while returning home. I arrived safely at my home on the 1st inst. after having passed through a variety of scenes, some of which, I design to disclose to you in this letter. You will probably be surprised, when you learn, that I am no longer a member of the Mormonite Church. The circumstances which led to this are numerous, and of such a character, that I should have been compelled to sacrifice every principle of honesty, or cease to support a system, which I conceive to be grossly inconsistent, and in opposition to the best interests of human society. The first thing that materially affected my mind, so as to weaken my confidence, was the falsehood of Joseph's vision. You know perfectly well, that Joseph had, or said he had, a vision, or revelation, in which it was made known to him by the spirit, that Oliver had raised up a great church in Missouri. This was so confidently believed, previous to our leaving Ohio, that while calculating the number in the Church, several hundred were added, supposed to be in Missouri. The great Church was found to consist of three or four females. The night we took lodgings in the school-house, and the morning which succeeded it, presented circumstances which I had not anticipated. When you intimated to Joseph that the land which he and Oliver had selected, was inferior in point of quality to other lands adjoining, had you seen the same spirit manifested in me, which you saw in him, would you not have concluded me to be under the influence of violent passion, bordering on madness, rather than the meek and gentle spirit which the Gospel inculcates? When you complained that he had abused you, and you observed to him, "I wish you not to tell us any more, that you know these by the spirit when you do not; you told us, that Oliver had raised up a large Church here, and there is no such thing;" he replied, "I see it, and it will be so." This appeared to me, to be a shift, better suited to an impostor, than a true Prophet of the Lord. And from that time I resolved, to weigh well every circumstance; and I can assure you, that no one that has any bearing on the subject, escaped my notice. But the spirit considered your insolence to Joseph, too intolerable, too [to] be passed over unnoticed. Hence the commandment: "if he repent not of his sins, which is unbelief and blindness of heart, let him take heed lest he fall. Behold his mission is given unto him, and it shall not be given again."³⁰ You are to be careful, to submit patiently to all the abuse which Joseph sees fit to pour upon you; and to swallow passively, all the spurious visions, and false prophecies, that he in his clemency thinks proper to

³⁰ BC 59:19-20; LDS D&C 58:15-16, [1-2] August 1831.

bestow upon you, lest you fall from your Bishoprick, never to regain it. These men, under whose influence you act, were entire strangers to you, until you embraced this new system of faith. Now, permit me to inquire; have you not frequently observed in Joseph, a want of that sobriety, prudence, and stability, which are some of the most prominent traits in the christian character? Have you not often discovered in him, a spirit of lightness and levity, a temper of mind easily irritated, and an habitual proneness to jesting and joking? Have you not repeatedly proved to your own satisfaction, that he says he knows things to be so by the spirit, when they are not so? You most certainly have. Have you not reason then to believe, or at least to suspect, that the revelations which come from him, are something short of infallible, and instead of being the production of divine wisdom, emanate from his own weak mind? Some suppose his weakness, nay, his wickedness, can form no reasonable objection to his revelations; and "were he to get another man's wife, and seek to kill her husband, it could be no reason why we should not believe revelations through him, for David did the same." So Sidney asserted, and many others concurred with him in sentiment. The commandment we received to purchase, or make a water craft, directed us to proceed down the river in it as far as St. Louis, and from thence, with the exception of Joseph and his two scribes, we were to proceed on our journey home two by two.³¹ The means of conveyance being procured, we embarked for St. Louis, but unpropitious events rolled on, superseded the commandment, frustrated our plans, and we had separated before we had accomplished one half of the voyage. The cause which produced this disastrous result, was a spirit of animosity and discord, which made its appearance on board, the morning after we left Independence.³² The conduct of some of the Elders became highly displeasing to Oliver, who, in the greatness of his power, uttered this malediction; "as the Lord God liveth, if you do not behave better, some accident will befall you." The manner in which this was handed out, evinced it to be the ebullition of a spirit, similar to that which influenced Joseph in the school-house. No accident however befel[l] them, until Joseph in the afternoon of the third day,³³ assumed the direction of affairs on board of that canoe, which, with other matters of difference, together with Oliver's curse, increased the irritation of the crew, who, in time of danger, refused to exert their physical powers, in consequence of which, they ran foul of a sawyer, and were in danger of upsetting. This was sufficient to flutter the timid spirit of the Prophet and his scribe, who had accompanied him on board that canoe, and like the sea-tossed mariner, when threatened with the horrors of a watery grave, they unanimously desired, to set their feet once more upon something more firm than a liquid surface: therefore, by the persuasion of Joseph, we landed before sunset, intending to pass the night upon the bank of the river. Preparations were made to spend the night as comfortably as existing circumstances would admit, and then an attempt was made, to affect a reconciliation betwixt the contending parties. The business of settlement commenced, which elicited much conversation, and excited considerable feeling on both sides. Oliver's denunciation was brought into view; his conduct and equipage, were compared to "a fop of a sportsman;" he and Joseph were represented, as highly imperious and quite dictatorial; and Joseph and Sidney, were reprimanded for their excessive cowardice. Joseph seemed inclined to arm himself according to his usual custom, in case of opposition, with the judgments of God, for the purpose of pouring them, like a thunder bolt upon the rebellious Elders; but one or two retorted, "none of your threats:" which completely disarmed him, and he reserved his judgment for a more suitable

³¹ BC 61:7-12; LDS D&C 60:5-8, 8 August 1831.

³² Booth left Independence on 9 August 1831. The morning after would be 10 August.

³³ The third day would be 11 August 1831.

occasion. Finding myself but little interested in the settlement, believing the principles of discord too deeply rooted to be easily eradicated, I laid myself down upon the ground, and in silence, contemplated awhile the events of the evening, as they passed before me. These are the men to whom the Lord has intrusted the mysteries, and the keys of his kingdom; whom he has authorized to bind or loose on earth, and their decision shall be ratified in Heaven. These are the men sent forth, to promulgate a new revelation, and to usher in a new dispensation -- at whose presence the "Heavens are to shake, the hills tremble, the mountains quake, and the earth open and swallow up their enemies." -- These are the leaders of the Church, and the only Church on earth the Lord beholds with approbation. Surely, I never witnessed so much confusion and discord, among the Elders of any other Church; nevertheless they are all doomed to a perpetual curse, except they receive the doctrines and precepts which Mormonism inculcates, and place themselves under the tuition of men, more ignorant and unholy than themselves. In the midst of meditations like these, I sunk into the arms of sleep, but was awakened at a late hour, to witness and consent to a reconciliation, between the parties. The next morning,³⁴ Joseph manifested an aversion to risk his person any more, upon the rough and rapid current of the Missouri, and in fact, upon any other river; and he again had recourse to his usual method, of freeing himself from the embarrassment[s of a former commandment, by]³⁵ obtaining another in opposition to it. He succeeded according to his desires. A new commandment was issued, in which a great curse was pronounced against the waters; navigating them, was to be attended with extreme danger; and all the saints in general, were prohibited journeying upon them to the promised land.³⁶ From this circumstance, the Missouri river was named the river of Destruction. It was decreed, that we should proceed on our journey by land, and preach by the way as we passed along. Joseph, Sidney and Oliver, were to press their way forward with all possible speed, and to preach only in Cincinnati; and there they were to lift up their voices, and proclaim against the whole of that wicked City. The method by which Joseph and Co. designed to proceed home, it was discovered, would be very expensive. "The Lord don't care how much money it takes to get us home," said Sidney. Not satisfied with the money they received from you, they used their best endeavors to exact money from others, who had but little, compared with what they had; telling them in substance, "you can beg your passage, on foot, but as we are to travel in the stage, we must have money." You will find, sir, that the expense of these three men, was one hundred dollars more than three of our company expended, while on our journey home; and for the sake of truth and honesty, let these men never again open their mouths, to insult the common-sense of mankind, by contending for equality, and the community of goods in society, until there is a thorough alteration in their method of proceeding. It seems, however, they had drained their pockets, when they arrived at Cincinnati, for they were there under the necessity of pawning their trunk, in order to continue their journey home. Here they violated the commandment, by not preaching; and when an inquiry was made respecting the cause of that neglect, at one time they said, they could get no house to preach in; at another time they stated, that they could have had the court-house, had they staid [stayed] a day or two longer, but the Lord made it known to them, that they should go on; and other similar excuses, involving like contradictions. Thus they turn and twist the commandments, to suit their whims, and they violate them when they please with

³⁴ 12 August 1831.

³⁵ Words in brackets come from a reprint of letter in E. D. Howe, *Mormonism Unveiled* (Painesville [Ohio]: Printed and published by the author, 1834), 206.

³⁶ BC 62:3-7, 16-17, 19, 25, 28-29; LDS D&C 61:3-6, 14-16, 18, 23, 27-28, 12 August 1831.

perfect impunity. They can at any time obtain a commandment suited to their desires, and as their desires fluctuate and become reversed, they get a new one to supercede the other, and hence the contradictions which abound in this species of revelation. The next day after we were cast upon the shore, and had commenced our journey by land, myself and three others went on board of a canoe, and re-commenced our voyage down the river. From this time a constant gale of prosperity wafted us forward, and not an event transpired, but what tended to our advance, until we arrived at our much-desired homes. At St. Louis we took passage in a steam-boat, and came to Wellsville; and from thence in the stage home. We travelled about eight hundred miles farther than the three who took their passage in the stage, and arrived at our homes but a few days later.³⁷ It is true we violated the commandment by not preaching by the way, and so did they by not preaching in Cincinnati. But it seems that none of us considered the commandment worthy of much notice.

In this voyage upon the waters, we demonstrated that the great dangers existed only in imagination, and the commandment to be the offspring of a pusillanimous spirit. The spirit also revealed to Joseph, that "on the steam-boats, plots were already laid for our destruction." This too we proved to be false. While descending the Missouri river, Peter and Frederick,³⁸ two of my company, divulged a secret respecting Oliver, which placed his conduct on a parallel with Ziba's; for which Ziba was deprived of his Elder and Apostleship: "Let that which was bestowed upon Ziba, be taken from him, and let him stand as a member in the Church, and let him labor with his own hands with the brethren."³⁹ And thus by commandment, poor Ziba, one of the twelve Apostles, is thrust down; while Oliver the scribe, also an Apostle, who had been guilty of similar conduct, is set on high, to prepare work for the press; and no commandment touches him, only to exalt him higher. -- These two persons stated, that had they known previous to their journey to Missouri, what they then knew, they never should have accompanied Oliver thither.

Sidney, since his return, has written a description of the land of Zion. But it differs essentially from that which you wrote; so much so, that either yours or his must be false. Knowing him to be constitutionally inclined to exaggerate, and suspecting that this habit would be as likely to preponderate, in his written, as in his oral communications, you cautioned him against it. "What I write will be written by the most infallible inspiration of the Holy spirit," said he with an air of contempt. You must be careful sir, or it will again sound in your ears, "if he repent not" for giving a false description of the land of Zion, let him take heed lest he fall from his office.⁴⁰ This, Sidney said, was one reason why you were not permitted to return to the State of Ohio. The want of time and paper notify me to bring this letter to a close. And now permit me to intreat [entreat] you, to candidly view the whole subject, from the commencement unto the present time. Look at it with your eyes, and no longer suffer these strangers to blind you, and daub you with their untempered [untempered] mortar. Think how often you have been stumbled by those discordant revelations, false visions, and lying prophecies. Put into practice the

³⁷ According to Booth he arrived at his home on 1 September 1831 probably after staying in Kirtland a few days. Joseph Smith and companions arrived in Kirtland on 27 August 1831.

³⁸ Peter Whitmer, Jr. and Frederick G. Williams.

³⁹ BC 59:74-75; LDS D&C 58:60, [1-2] August 1831. At a special conference held on 4 August 1831 Ziba Peterson confessed "of his transgressions which was satisfactory to the Church as approved by unanimous vote" (Cannon and Cook, *Far West Record*, 9).

⁴⁰ See BC 64:61-63; LDS D&C 63:55-56, [30-31] August 1831.

resolutions you expressed to me the morning after the collision in the school-house, that you would go home, and attend to your own business. Transfer the lands you hold in your hands, to the persons whose money paid for it. Place yourself from under the influence of the men who have deceived you; burst the bands of delusion; and fly for your life, fly from the habitations haunted by impostors; and having done this, you most surely will be glad and rejoice, and prove to your own satisfaction, as I have done, the falsity of Joseph's prophetic declaration, "if you turn against us you will enjoy no more satisfaction in the world."

E. B.

Some things are intimated in the foregoing letter, which more properly belongs to Cowdery's mission to the Indians; and when I come to notice that mission, those things will, probably, be more fully exhibited.

It is also indirectly stated, that Rigdon has acquired the habit of exaggeration. The truth of this statement, I presume, will be doubted but by few, who have been long acquainted with him. Most of his communications carry the appearance of high and false coloring; and I am persuaded, that truth by his embellishing touch, often degenerates into fiction. I have heard him several different times, give a representation of the interview between himself, and to use his own phraseology, "the far-famed Alexander Campbell." This man's wonted shrewdness and presence of mind, forsook him when in the presence of this gigantic Mormonite; so much so, that "he was quite confused and silly." I will give you a specimen of the language, with which Rigdon said he assailed him: "You have lied Alexander. Alexander you have lied. If you do not receive the Book of Mormon you will be damned." With such like [arguments he brow-beat his antagonist, until he had silenced and set him down, like the pusillanimous cur,]⁴¹ at the feet of his chastising master. "You are a liar, you are a child of the Devil, you are an enemy to all righteousness, the spirit of the Devil is in you," and the like, is dealt out profusely against an obstinate opponent, and especially, one whom they are pleased to nickname apostate. I regret the necessity I am under of making such statements, and could wish there had been no occasion for them. But truth compels me to it, and the good of society demands it.

Yours affectionately,

EZRA BOOTH.

REV. I. EDDY.

(Ohio Star 2 [24 November 1831]:3, Ravenna, Ohio, emphasis omitted)

[Letter 8 - Ezra Booth to Rev. Ira Eddy]

Nelson, Portage Co. Nov. 29, 1831.

REV. & DEAR SIR --

The origin of the aborigines of this country, and their history before the introduction of eastern literature into the western hemisphere, has afforded a subject for much speculation, and deep research among the learned; and has occasioned considerable curiosity among various

⁴¹ Words in brackets come from a reprint of letter in Howe, *Mormonism Unveiled*, 209-10.

classes of people. But the subject still remains in impenetrable obscurity; and will so remain, unless He who has the power to speak, "let there be light," "and light shall break forth out of obscurity." But as this is a subject better calculated to gratify the speculative inquirer, than to purify the heart, by rectifying wrong principles in the mind, or to increase that kind of knowledge intimately connected with, and essential to practical improvements, either in civil or religious society, we may reasonably doubt, whether the Great Jehovah will soon, if ever, condescend to clear away the darkness, by giving a revelation, merely to gratify the desires of persons, who delight to wander in the region of conjecture and speculation. But he has already done it, cries the Mormonite Herald. The Book of Mormon which I hold in my hands, is a Divine Revelation, and the very thing we need, to burst the cloud and remove the darkness, which has long surrounded the mysterious and degraded aborigines. We now know that the Natives who inhabit the forests of America, are a "branch of the House of Israel;" and by the means of this blessed book, they are soon, even in this generation, to be restored to the knowledge, and the true worship of the God of Israel. -- Among them is to be built, the "glorious City of the New-Jerusalem," in the midst of which is to stand, the splendid and magnificent Temple, dedicated to the Most High God, and "Oliver being called and commanded of the Lord God, to go forth among the Lamanites, to proclaim glad tidings of great joy unto them, by presenting unto them, the fulness of the Gospel of the only begotten son of God,"⁴² &c. The grand enterprise of introducing this new dispensation, or the fulness of the Gospel, among the Indian tribes, who have recently received the appellation of Lamanites, was committed in charge to Oliver Cowdery, a young man of high fame among the Mormonites. -- His credentials, and the credentials of the three others associated with him in the mission, will be found in the following revelations, which I transcribe for your perusal, and also for some future remarks, which I design to offer.

A REVELATION UNTO OLIVER, GIVEN SEPTEMBER, 1830.⁴³

Behold, I say unto you Oliver, that it shall be given thee, that thou shalt be heard by the Church in all things whatsoever thou shalt teach them by the comforter, concerning the revelations and commandments which I have given. But verily, verily, I say unto you, no one shall be appointed to receive commandments and revelations in the Church, excepting my servant Joseph, for he receiveth them even as Moses, and thou shalt be obedient unto the things which I shall give unto him, even as Aaron, to declare faithfully the commandments and the revelations, with power and authority unto the Church. And if thou art led at any time by the comforter to speak or teach, or at all times by the way of commandment unto the Church, thou may'st do it; but shalt not write by the way of commandment, but by wisdom: and thou shalt not command him who is at thy head, and at the head of the Church; for I have given him the keys of the mysteries of the revelations which are sealed, until I shall appoint unto him another in his stead. -- And now behold I say unto you, that thou shalt go unto the Lamanites, and preach my Gospel unto them, and cause my Church to be established among them; and thou shalt have revelations, but write them not by way of commandment. And now I say unto you, that it is not revealed, and no man knoweth where the City shall be built, but it shall be given hereafter. Behold, I say unto you, that it shall be among the Lamanites. Thou shalt not

⁴² These words come from the missionary covenant of 17 October 1830 copied in this letter.

⁴³ BC 30; LDS D&C 28, [5-26] September 1830.

leave this place until after the Conference, and my servant Joseph shall be appointed to rule the Conference, by the voice of it: and what he saith unto thee that thou shalt tell. And again, thou shalt take thy brother Hiram between him and thee alone, and tell him that those things which he hath written from that stone are not of me, and that Satan hath deceived him, for these things have not been appointed unto him, neither shall any thing be appointed to any in this Church, contrary to the Church Covenant, for all things must be done in order, and by commandment, by the prayer of faith, and thou shalt settle all, these things, before thou shalt take thy journey among the Lamanites; and it shall be given from to time, that thou shalt go, until the time that thou shalt return, what thou shalt do; and thou must open thy mouth at all times, declaring my Gospel with the sound of rejoicing. -- Amen.

MANCHESTER, Oct. 17, 1830.

I, Oliver, being commanded of the Lord God, to go forth unto the Lamanites, to proclaim glad tidings of great joy unto them, by presenting unto them the fullness of the Gospel, of the only begotten son of God; and also, to rear up a pillar as a witness where the Temple of God shall be built, in the glorious New-Jerusalem; and having certain brothers with me, who are called of God to assist me, whose names are Parley, Peter and Ziba, do therefore most solemnly covenant before God, that I will walk humbly before him, and do this business, and this glorious work according as he shall direct me by the Holy Ghost; ever praying for mine and their prosperity, and deliverance from bonds, and from imprisonments, and whatsoever may befall[1] us, with all patience and faith. -- Amen.

OLIVER COWDERY.

We, the undersigned, being called and commanded of the Lord God, to accompany our Brother Oliver Cowdery, to go to the Lamanites, and to assist in the above mentioned glorious work and business. We do, therefore, most solemnly covenant before God, that we will assist him faithfully in this thing, by giving heed unto all his words and advice, which is, or shall be given him by the spirit of truth, ever praying with all prayer and supplication, for our and his prosperity, and our deliverance from bonds, and imprisonments, and whatsoever may come upon us, with all patience and faith. -- Amen.

Signed in presence of

JOSEPH SMITH, Jun.
DAVID WHITMER,
P. P. PRATT,
ZIBA PETERSON,
PETER WHITMER.⁴⁴

In the preceding revelation, the principal thing which claims your attention, is the mission to the Indians; for with that mission many circumstances are connected, which clearly evince, that it originated from human imbecility, and diabolical depravity. -- There are also some other things, the meaning of which, you will not be likely to apprehend, without some explanation. In this, as well as several of the commandments, it is clearly and explicitly stated, that the right of delivering written commandments, and revelations, belong exclusively to Smith, and no other

⁴⁴ The three missionaries signed their covenant in the presence of Joseph Smith, Jun. and David Whitmer.

person can interfere, without being guilty of sacrilege. In this office he is to stand, until another is appointed in his place, and no other person can be appointed in his stead, unless he falls through transgression; and in such a case, he himself is authorized to appoint his successor.⁴⁵ But how is he to be detected, should he become guilty of transgression. The commandment makes provision for this. His guilt will become manifest by his inability to utter any more revelations, and should he presume "to get another man's wife," and commit adultery; and "by the shedding of blood, seek to kill her husband," if he retains the use of his tongue, so as to be able to utter his jargon, he can continue as long as he pleases in the bed of adultery, and wrap himself with garments stained with blood, shed by his own hands, and still retain the spotless innocence of the holiest among mortals; and must be continued in the office of revelator, and head of the Church. Some others, and especially Cowdery, have earnestly desired to relieve Smith of some part of his burden. Cowdery's desires for this work were so keen and excessive, as, to use his own language, it "was unto me a burning fire shut up in my bones, and I was weary with forebearing, and I could forbear no longer;"⁴⁶ and he did in fact, issue some productions, which he said bore the Divine impress; but Smith fixed upon them the stamp of devilish. But it seems, in order to compromise the matter, that Cowdery was permitted to "speak or to teach, at all times, by way of commandment unto the Church: but not to write them by the way of commandment;"⁴⁷ thus Cowdery is authorized to give verbal commandments to the Church, by the inspiration of the spirit, which, if he afterwards writes, ceases to be inspiration; therefore, a commandment delivered orally, may be divinely inspired; but the same communicated, written verbatim, so far loses its former character, that it degenerates into a production of an infernal stamp. Here is a mystery, for aught I know, peculiar to Mormonism; and none but Mormonites, I presume, will attempt to unravel it. But it finds its parallel in the following. Smith assures his followers, that what he speaks by the spirit, and is written, is infallible in operation, but if it is not written, he may sometimes be mistaken. -- He tells them, that the right to deliver written revelations, belongs exclusively to himself, and no other person shall interfere in the business; and if he transgresses, he will graciously condescend to appoint another in his stead, and the only proof produced for the support of such assertions, is barely his word upon which they implicitly rely, and become entirely resigned to place their person and property under his control, and even risk the salvation of their souls upon his say-so. Such glaring duplicity on the one hand, and unaccountable credulity on the other, seldom have a parallel in the annals of man.

Never was there a despot more jealous of his prerogative than Smith; and never was a fortress guarded with more vigilance and ardor, against every invading foe, than he guards these. Smith apprehended a revival in the department of written inspiration, from another quarter, and hence Cowdery was commissioned to commence an attack, and suppress the enemy, before he had acquired sufficient stability and strength, so as to become formidable. "Thou shalt take thy brother Hiram between him and thee alone, and tell him the things he hath written from that stone," &c. Hiram Page, one of the eight witnesses, and also one of the "money diggers," found a smooth stone, upon which there appeared to be writing, which when transcribed upon paper,

⁴⁵ BC 45:1-6; LDS D&C 43:1-6, [9-23] February 1831.

⁴⁶ These words came from a copy of a document written by Oliver Cowdery as a commandment from God. See Marquardt, *Joseph Smith Revelations*, 381.

⁴⁷ See BC 30:4-5; LDS D&C 28:4-5.

disappeared from the stone, and another impression appeared in its place. This when copied, vanished as the former had done, and so it continued alternately appearing and disappearing; in the meanwhile, he continued to write, until he had written over considerable paper. It bore striking marks of a Mormonite revelation, and was received as an authentic document by most of the Mormonites, till Smith, by his superior sagacity, discovered it to be a Satanic fraud.⁴⁸

A female, professing to be a prophetess, made her appearance in Kirtland,⁴⁹ and so ingratiated herself into the esteem and favor of some of the Elders, that they received her, as a person commissioned to act a conspicuous part in Mormonizing the world. Rigdon, and some others, gave her the right hand of fellowship, and literally saluted her with what they called the kiss of charity. But Smith viewing her as an encroaching upon his sacred premises, declared her an impostor, and she returned to the place from whence she came. Her visit, however, made a deep impression on the minds of many, and the barbed arrow which she left in the hearts of some, is not yet eradicated.

REV. I. EDDY.

Yours affectionately,

EZRA BOOTH.

(Ohio Star 2 [8 December 1831]:1, Ravenna, Ohio, emphasis omitted)

[Letter 9 - Ezra Booth to Rev. Ira Eddy]

Nelson, Portage Co. Dec. 6, 1831.

REV. & DEAR SIR --

In this letter the mission to the Indians will be brought into view, and with it, are connected circumstances and facts, sufficient, one would suppose, to convince every honest and unprejudiced Mormonite, of the fallacy and deception of Mormonism. But a Mormonite of the highest grade, is invulnerable by facts the most notorious, and evidence as glaring as the noon-day sun; for they affirm, they know by the spirit that Mormonism is what it pretends to be; and should Smith acknowledge it to be a fabrication, they would not believe him. This forms the highest climax in Mormonism, and but few have attained to it. After Cowdery, and his three associates had left the state of N. Y. while bending their course to the west, he was directed by the spirit to Kirtland, for the special purpose of enlisting Rigdon in the Mormonite cause. I have since learned, that the spirit which directed in this enterprise, was no other than Pratt, who had previously become acquainted with Rigdon, and had been proselyted by him into what is called the Campbellite faith. This new system appears to have been particularly suited to Rigdon's taste, and calculated to make an impression on his mind. But before he could fully embrace it, he must

⁴⁸ Hiram Page's revelations were believed by Elders David Whitmer, Peter Whitmer, Jr., and John Whitmer. See BC 31-33; LDS D&C 30, [26-28] September 1830.

⁴⁹ Evidently a woman by the name of Hubble. John Whitmer recorded in his history, "About these days there was a woman by the name of Hubble who professed to be a prophetess of the Lord and professed to have many revelations, and knew the Book of Mormon was true; and that she should be a teacher in the Church of Christ. She appear[ed] very sanctimonious and deceived some, who were not able to detect her in her hypocrisy: others however had a spirit of discernment [discernment]; and her folies and abominations were made manifest" (Westergren, *From Historian to Dissident*, 37-38). See BC 45; LDS D&C 43, [9-23] February 1831.

"receive a testimony from God." In order to this, he labored as he was directed by his Preceptor, almost incessantly and earnestly in praying, till at length, his mind was wrapped up in a vision; and to use his own language, "to my astonishment I saw the different orders of professing Christians passing before my eyes, with their hearts exposed to view, and they were as corrupt as corruption itself. That society to which I belonged also passed before my eyes, and to my astonishment, it was as corrupt as the others. Last of all that little man who brought me the Book of Mormon, passed before my eyes with his heart open, and it was as pure as an angel: and this was a testimony from God, that the Book of Mormon was a Divine Revelation." Rigdon is one who has ascended to the summit of Mormonism; and [t]his vision stands as the foundation of his knowledge. He frequently affirms, that these things are not a matter of faith with him, but of absolute knowledge. He has been favored with many extraordinary visions, in some of which he saw Kirtland with the surrounding country, consecrated as the promised land, and the Churches in the state of N. Y. expected to receive their everlasting inheritance in the state of Ohio,⁵⁰ and this expectation was grounded upon Rigdon's visions, while he was in the state of N. Y. These visions are considered by the Church as entitled to no credit, and laid aside as mere rubbish.

As it relates to the purity of the heart of "that little man," if a pure and pleasant fountain can send forth corrupt and bitter streams, then may the heart of that man be pure, who enters into a matrimonial contract with a young lady, and obtains the consent of her parents; but as soon as his back is turned upon her, he violates his engagements, and prostitutes his honor by becoming the gallant of another, and resolves in his heart, and expresses resolutions to marry her.⁵¹ But as the practice of a man will ever stand as a general criterion by which the principles of the heart are to be tested, we say, that the heart of such a man is the reverse of purity.

From Kirtland, Cowdery & Co. were directed by the spirit to Sandusky, where they contemplated opening their mission, and proselyting the Indians residing at that place. But neither Cowdery, nor the spirit which directed him, was able to open the way to, or make any impressions upon their minds. Being frustrated in this, his first attempt to convert the Natives, he turned his attention and course to Missouri, and when near the eastern line of that state, he halted for several days, for the purpose of obtaining, by inquiry, information respecting the Indians, still further to the West. It appears that he was fearful that his infallible guide, (the spirit,) was incapable to direct him, while proceeding further to the west; consequently, he applied to men more capable of giving instruction than the spirit, by which he was influenced. When he arrived at the western line of Missouri, he passed it into the Indian territory, where he continued but a short time, before he was notified by the U. S. agent, that he must either re-pass the line, or be compelled to take his residence in the garrison, forty miles up the Arkansas river. As there was

⁵⁰ Sidney Rigdon's letter of introduction of John Whitmer to the Saints in Ohio stated, "you are living on the land of promise . . . you are dwelling on your eternal inheritance" (as cited in Howe, *Mormonism Unveiled*, 111), letter written circa 4 January 1831.

⁵¹ This incident relates to Oliver Cowdery. Before Oliver left New York he apparently made an arrangement to marry Elizabeth Ann Whitmer who was fifteen years old at the time. Cowdery was nine years older than Elizabeth. On 26 May 1832, prior to his marriage to Elizabeth in December, a conference was held and it took "into consideration a certain transgression of our br. Oliver committed in the fall of 1830 in the Township of Mayfield[,] Cuyahoga County[,] State of Ohio" (Cannon and Cook, *Far West Record*, 49). In 1831 Cowdery "made his confession to the individuals injured & received their forgiveness." The minutes as copied in the "Far West Record" do not list Oliver Cowdery in the list of high priests present and omitted who was the clerk of the conference.

no other alternative, the former seemed to him the most expedient; and he never possessed courage sufficient to pass the line, or visit the residence of the Indians since. Thus you behold a man, "called and commanded of the Lord God, to go forth unto the Lamanites," and establish his Church among them; but no sooner is he set down in the field of his mission, and surrounded by his anticipated converts, than he is driven by a comparative nothing, from the field, and obliged to relinquish his contemplated harvest. -- This is the person commissioned by the Lord to proceed the western wilds, and as he himself stated, "to the place where the foot of a white man never trod," ["to rear up a pillar for a witness, where the Temple of God shall be built in the glorious New-Jerusalem." But alas! he was arrested by man in his course, and by the breath of man the mighty undertaking was blown into the air, and Cowdery was thrown back among the Gentiles, to wait for the spirit to devise some new plans in the place of those which had been frustrated. But as a City and a Temple must be built, as every avenue leading to the Indians was closed against the Mormonites, it was thought that they should be built among the Gentiles, which is in direct opposition to the original plan -- as foreign from the design of the spirit, expressed in several commandments, as it would have been, had the Directors, who were appointed to build the Court-house in Ravenna, buil[t] it in Trumbull county, foreign from the design of those who entrusted them with the business.

Though their plans had hitherto failed, they were unwilling to abandon the Indian enterprize; and in a commandment it was stated, that Cowdery and others should receive a written recommendation, signed by the Elders, for the purpose of presenting it to the Indian agent, in order to obtain permission from him, to visit the Indians in their settlements. The recommendation was written according to commandment, and frequent opportunities occurred in which it might have been presented to the agent, but it never was presented, and of course was useless, he was censured by some for not presenting it, but I suppose the spirit directed him not to do it.

Another method has been invented, in order to remove obstacles which hitherto have proved insurmountable. "The Lord's store-house," is to be furnished with goods suited to the Indian trade, and persons are to obtain license from the government to dispose of them to the Indians in their own territory; at the same time, they are to disseminate the principles of Mormonism among them.⁵² From this smug[g]ling method of preaching to the Indians, they anticipate a favorable result. In addition to this, and to co-operate with it, it has been made known by revelation, that it will be pleasing to the Lord, should they form a matrimonial alliance with the Natives; and by this means the Elders, who comply with the thing so pleasing to the Lord, and for which the Lord has promised to bless those who do it abundantly, gain a residence in the Indian territory, independent of the agent.⁵³ It has been made known to one, who has left his wife in the state of N. Y. that he is entirely free from his wife, and he is at liberty to take him a wife from among the Lamanites. It was easily perceived that this permission, was perfectly suited to his desires. I have frequently heard him state, that the Lord has made it known to him, that he is as free from his wife as from any other woman; and the only crime that I have ever

⁵² See "Kirtland Revelations Book," 89-91, original in LDS archives, 20 July 1831; Marquardt, *Joseph Smith Revelations*, 142-43. This revelation was not included in the BC. Revised in 1835 D&C 27, now LDS D&C 57.

⁵³ The text of this revelation was not written down in July 1831 but Booth gives the basic idea of the oral presentation. The revelation was given to facilitate entrance into the reservation for missionary work.

heard alleged against her is, she is violently opposed to Mormonism. But before this contemplated marriage can be carried into effect, he must return to the State of N. Y. and settle his business, for fear, should he return, after that affair had taken place, the civil authority would apprehend him as a criminal.

It is with pleasure I close this exposition, having in part accomplished, what I intended when I commenced it. The employment has been an unpleasant one to me, and from the first, I should have gladly avoided it, could I have done it, and maintained a conscience void of offence, towards God and man. -- But should an individual by this exposition, be extricated or prevented from falling into the delusion, which has been the subject of consideration, I shall be amply compensated, for the painful task which I have performed.

REV. I. EDDY.

Yours affectionately,
EZRA BOOTH.

(Ohio Star 2 [8 December 1831]:1, Ravenna, Ohio, emphasis omitted)