

Letters of Warren Parrish

May 29, 1837

To the Bishop & his council in Kirtland  
the Stake of Zion

I prefer the following  
charges against Pres. Sidney Rigdon  
viz. for expressing an unbelief in the  
revelations of God, both old and new,  
also an unbelief in the agency of man  
and his accountability to God, or that  
there is such a principle existing as  
Sin — and also, for lying & declaring  
that God required it at his hands

Kirtland 29<sup>th</sup> May 1837

W. Parrish

(Newel K. Whitney Collection, L. Tom Perry Special Collections, Brigham Young  
University, Provo, Utah)

February 5, 1838

KIRTLAND, Feb. 5, 1838.

To the EDITOR of the PAINESVILLE REPUBLICAN:

SIR: -- I have taken the liberty to send you a synopsis of some of the leading features of the characters of Joseph Smith, Jr., and Sydney Rigdon, who are styled leaders of the Mormon Church, and if you are disposed, and think it would be of service to the public, you are at liberty to publish it. I have for several years past been a member of the Church of Latter day Saint,s commonly called Mormons, belonging to the quorum of seventy High Priests, and an intimate acquaintance of Joseph Smith, Jr., and Sydney Rigdon, the modern Prophets, and have had an opportunity of ascertaining to as great an extent, perhaps the real characters of these men, as any other individual. I have been Smith's private Secretary, called to fill this high and responsible station by revelation which I wrote myself as it drop[p]ed from the lips of the Prophet, and although contrary to my natural inclinations, I submitted to it, fearing to disobey or treat lightly the commands of the Almighty. I have kept his Journal, and like Baram [sic; Baruch], the ancient scribe, have had the honor of writing the History of one of the Prophets.—I have attended him in the private Councils, in the secret chambers and in public exhibition.—I have performed a pilgrimage with him, (not to Mecca,) but to Missouri, a distance of 1000 miles for the redemption of Zion, in company with about two hundred others, called the camp of Israel. When we arrived in Clay County adjoining Jackson County, Mo., in which Zion was located by revelation, and from which our brethren had been driven, we were informed through the Prophet that God had revealed to us that we need not cross over and

fight as we had expected, but that God had accepted our sacrifice as he did that of Abraham, ours being equal to his when he offered up his Son. Therefore, we were sealed up unto eternal life in the name of Jesus Christ, as a reward for our suffering and obedience. I have set by his side and penned down the translation of the Egyptian Hieroglyphicks as he claimed to receive it by direct inspiration of Heaven. I have listened to him with feelings of no ordinary kind, when he declared that the audible voice of God, instructed him to establish a Banking-Anti Banking institution which like Aaron's rod should swallow up all other Banks (the Bank of Monroe excepted,) and grow and flourish and spread from the rivers to the ends of the earth, and survive when all others should be laid in ruins. I have been astonished to hear him declare that we had 60,000 Dollars in specie in our vaults, and \$600,000 at our command, when we had not to exceed \$6,000 and could not command any more; also that we had but about ten thousand Dollars of our bills in circulation, when he, as Cashier of the institution, knew that there was at least \$150,000. Knowing their extreme poverty when they commenced in this speculation, I have been not a little surprised to hear them assert that they were worth from three to four hundred thousand Dollars Cash, and in less than ninety days after, became insolvent without any change in their business affairs. But such has been the audacity of these boasting blasphemers, that they have assumed the authority to curse, or to bless, to damn, or to save, not only this Church, but this entire generation, and that they hold their destinies in this world and that which is to come. And such has been their influence over this Church in this place, that they have filched the monies from their pockets and obtained their earthly substance for the purpose of establishing a Bank and various wild speculations, in order that they might aggrandize themselves and families, until they have reduced their followers to wretchedness and want. For the year past their lives have been one continued scene of lying, deception, and fraud, and that too in the name of God. But this I can account for in my own mind, having a knowledge of their private characters and sentiments; I believe them to be confirmed Infidels, who have not the fear of God before their eyes, notwithstanding their high pretensions to holiness, and frequent correspondence with the Angels of Heaven; and the revelations of Jesus Christ by the power of the Holy Ghost. What avails the claims of such men to holiness of heart, when their examples do violence to the system of morality, to say nothing about religion? What more favorable idea, can one entertain who has heard them say that man has no more agency than a wheelbarrow, and consequently is not accountable, and in the final end of all things no such principle will exist as sin. Thus language indepent of many abominations that might be named, such as the Prophet's fighting four pitched battles at fisticuff, within four years, one with his own natural brother, one with his brotherinlaw, one with Ezra Thair, and one with a Baptist priest, speaks volumes.—Their management in this place has reduced society to a complete wreck. The recent outrage committed here, viz: the burning of the Printing establishment, I have no doubt was nothing more, nor less than carrying into effect Smith and Rigdons last revelation that they had before they took their leave of this place between two days—in fact the lying, fighting, stealing, running away &c., that has been carried on among us is only reducing their theory to practice, and in some instances they have not only taught the theory, but have set the example themselves. And I am fully convinced that their precepts and examples both in public and in private, are calculated to corrupt the morals of their votaries, and cast a shade over their characters, which like the twilight of evening will soon settle into the gloom of

midnight darkness; and had it not been arrested in its mad career, would have transmitted to succeeding generations a system of hereditary tyranny, and spiritual despotism, unparalleled in the annals of the christian Church, the Church of Rome not excepted. But they have fled in the night; "they love darkness rather than light because their deeds are evil; the wicked flee when no man pursuth."—the printing establishment, book bindery &c., was formerly the property of Smith and Rigdon; it had been sold the day previous to its being set on fire, by virtue of two executions obtained against them of one thousand dollars each, for issuing banking paper contrary to law. The establishment had fallen into the hands of those who have of late remonstrated against the wickedness of the above named individuals; and had it not been sacrificed upon the altar of reckless fanaticism, it would no doubt at this time have been speaking the truth, as an atonement for an illspent life; a well grounded conviction of this fact was evidently one reason why Smith and Rigdon obtained a revelation to abscond; and that the Press must not at all hazards be suffered to be put into requisition against them, also that God would destroy this place by fire, for its wickedness against his Prophets, and that his servants are swift messengers of destruction, by whose hands he avenges himself upon his enemies; this accounts for the outrage. This is but a preface to the catalogue of their iniquities that might be enumerated. But the most astonishing thing after all is, that men of common sense and common abilities, should be so completely blinded as to dispense entirely with the evidence of their senses, and tamely submit to be led by such men, and to contenance such glaring inconsistencies; and at the same time to be made to believe, that they had God for their author and the happiness and well being of mankind for their end and aim. But the magic charm is broken at last; superstition and bigotry have begun to lose their influence and unclench their iron grasp from this devoted people who have "been led like lambs to the slaughter, and as a sheep is dumb before her shearers," so have we not dared to open our mouths. However justice seems to be in pursuit of the workers of iniquity; and sooner or later will overtake them: they will reap a just and sure retribution for their folly. This then is the conclusion of the whole matter; they lie by revelation, swindle by revelation, cheat and defraud by revelation, runaway by revelation, and if they do not mend their ways, I fear that they will at last be damned by revelation.

M. [sic; W.] PARRISH.

This is to certify that we are personally acquainted with said Parish, Smith and Rigdon, and that the above is a statement of facts according to our best recollections.

LUKE JOHNSON,	} <i>two of the twelve</i>
JOHN [F.] BOYNTON,	} <i>Apostles.</i>
SYLVESTER SMITH,	} <i>formerly presidents</i>
LEONARD RICH.	} <i>of the seventies.</i>

(*Painesville Republican* 2 [February 15, 1838]:3, Painesville, Ohio)

March 6, 1838

KIRTLAND, *Ohio, March 6, 1838.*

TO THE EDITOR OF ZION'S WATCHMAN.

*Dear Sir,*—I learn from your valuable and highly interesting periodical, which has casually fallen into my hands, that you are laying before the public a brief (and I believe thus far) a correct history of the Mormon church, which I think is conferring a favor upon the public that they are justly entitled to, as the abominations, evil designs, and practices of their leaders need only to be known and investigated, to explode their deep routed system of heresy, whose sable shades are hovering around the mental horizon [sic; horizon] of thousands, and is calculated to impair in the minds of the credulous and unsuspecting, the fair form of virtue and religion.

If I can render you any assistance in forwarding this laudable enterprise, by giving you a statement of facts that have fallen under my own observation, I shall consider that I am discharging a duty that I owe to God and my fellow creatures. I understand that P. P. Pratt, one of the twelve modern apostles, an intimate acquaintance of mine, is now holding forth in your city, and I have thought that a letter written by himself, to Joseph Smith Jr., containing a statement of facts in relation to the conduct of said Smith, and S. Rigdon, might be of service to lovers of truth; especially to the inhabitants of your city. The following is a true copy of the original:—

W. PARRISH.

[Here follows the copy of the letter of Parley P. Pratt to Joseph Smith, May 23, 1837.]

(*Zion's Watchman*, March 24, 1838, New York City, New York, emphasis retained)

March 13, 1838

KIRTLAND, March 13th, 1838.

SIR—Yours of Feb. 20th was put into my hands this morning, by the Post Master of this place, requesting me to state some facts in relation to the subject of your inquiries, which I cheerfully do, as it is a matter of no small moment to those interested. I have been a member of the church of Latter Day Saints, almost from its commencement. I enlisted in the Mormon faith, (as it is called,) in all good conscience, about one year before I ever saw Joseph Smith, Jr.—believing him to be a prophet of God, by whose hand the Lord would gather Israel, and establish his glorious kingdom on the earth, by bringing in that universal Sabbath of rest spoken of by all the Holy Prophets, and so much desired by all the Saints. I have travelled much, and preached much, in many of the United States, as my friend Elder Woodruff will bear me record; (who I learn is the leading man in the Mormon reform in your vicinity) many hundreds, and I think I might safely say thousands of miles we have travelled together in the Southern States, and western-country. When I was successfully proclaiming in the State of Tennessee, brother W. found his way to that country, through the far distant western wilds of Missouri and Arkansas, whither we had journeyed together the s[ea]son before. Under my hands he received his higher ordination to the ministry—but enough of this—give my respects to

him; he is a man I highly esteem, and should be pleased to see him upon this subject, if convenient; please show him this letter, and tell him that our apprehensions respecting the wickedness of our leaders have been more than realized, since our last interview before he left for the East. Smith and Rigdon have run away, and indeed most of the Smith family. Joseph Smith, Sen. the Patriarch, was arrested, after Joseph, Jr. and Sidney had absconded, upon a State warrant for a violation of the laws of his country, and would have been convicted, had he not been helped out of a window in the night and made his escape from Justice, as his son the prophet had done before him; and have not either of them been seen in this place since. Two or three days since, after Smith and Rigdon left this town, the Printing Office was set on fire and consumed, with all its contents, consisting of a large quantity of books, papers, book-binding, &c. I say set on fire, because this is the opinion of the public, and that too in fulfilment of Smith's revelation before he left; as I understand that he had prophesied the destruction of this place by fire; and it is presumed that the midnight incendiary that committed this outrage was one of his faithful disciples, who acted under his direction, that his prophesying might be fulfilled. The printing establishment had belonged to them, but had been sold at Sheriff's sale, by virtue of two executions of \$1000 each against said Smith and Rigdon, for issuing banking paper or bills contrary to law. It had fallen into hands that would have used it to expose their iniquities which accelerated the doom, and hastened their exit from this place. This town (Kirtland) is called the stake of Zion for the gathering of the Saints, established as they said by revelation, a place of safety and peace. Smith now says that the Saints must flee out, for God will destroy this place for its wickedness; they are fleeing by night, and on the Sabbath, to cheat and defraud their creditors; as their leaders have set the example. Smith and Rigdon have obtained their earthly substance by thousands and tens of thousands, penury and want stares them in the face, innocent women and children are suffering, yet they flee at the summons of their prophet. Lots of land in this village that Smith sold to his brethren, the Saints, but little more than one year since for \$1000, can now be bought for \$50. Their object for gathering them here is obvious, viz: to swindle them out of their money—their object in telling them to flee from this place, after assuring them that it was the will of God that they should purchase here and build up this city first, is to gather them and others that have something yet left, to swindle them out of their money—divisions and disease reign here, society is a wreck. Smith and Rigdon are notorious in this country for their rascality; also in the far West, Missouri, the place of gathering, as we learn by letters from that place, one of the twelve Latter Day Apostles, a friend of mine, says, that Smith and Rigdon acted more like desperadoes, when they were in that place last fall, than like civilized men or christians. The presiding elder of the church in that place, some of the Apostles there as well as here, and most all men of influence have left them to their own destruction. Many are moving away from Zion to the far West, on account of the confusion that prevails among them. Martin Harris, one of the witnesses to the book of Mormon, told me and others a few days since, that he never saw the plates with his natural eyes, but in a vision. He also said that Joseph, nor any other man, ever saw them in any other way; which agrees with the revelations, (see book of covenants, new edition, page 171.) On comparing the first and second edition of the book of covenants, which Smith claims to have received by direct revelation from heaven, there is a wide difference; whole sentences altered; language and meaning essentially different, which shows that they have no confidence in themselves.

Any man that would add to or diminish from John's revelations, God said, should be cursed; has the Lord given Joseph more liberty than he did his beloved disciple? Harris further stated that Joseph got drunk after he commenced translating, and the spirit of inspiration left him for a week—no doubt it did if he ever had it—but the faithful Paul informs us that God would choose the base things to bring to nought the things that are mighty. Query—do they remain base while God is using them? However, drunkenness is a characteristic of the family, if report is true. Be this as it may, two years ago this spring, at the solemn assembly, or enduement, as it was called, held at the Temple, in this stake of Zion, I saw one of Joseph Smith Jr.'s brothers, a high councillor and High Priest, drink wine and prophesy, until he fell down beastly drunk, and vomited. For further information I would refer you to the *Zion's Watchman*, printed in New York. I have commenced a correspondence with the editor upon this subject. Yours respectfully,  
WARREN PARRISH.

(*Waldo Patriot* 1 [May 4, 1838], Belfast, Maine)

August 11, 1838

KIRTLAND, AUG. 11<sup>TH</sup>, 1838.

Sir—In answer to your inquiries,

1st. Whether I believe in the book of Mormon as being of divine origin? I answer, I do not; and that for the best of reasons, viz. Martin Harris, one of the subscribing witnesses, has come out at last, and says he never saw the plates, from which the book purports to have been translated, except in vision, and he further says that any man who says he has seen them in any other way is a liar, Joseph not excepted;—see new edition, *Book of Covenants*, page 170 [sic; 171], which agrees with Harris's testimony.

2d. Whether J. Smith's brothers are still in the faith? I answer, that I do not believe they are, or ever were; neither do I believe that Joseph or Rigdon either believe in the Bible, book of Mormon, or book of Covenants; they are notorious infidels. Smith says he has got as good an inquisition around in Missouri, as ever the pope had, and he says that Mahomet was a true prophet, and he propagated his religion by the sword, and so will he; this he intends to do to my certain knowledge, if his own assertions can be believed.

3d. Orson Pratt was preaching Mormonism in New York the last I heard from him.

4th. William McLellen, Oliver Cowdery, David and John Whitmers and many others have withdrawn from them. Lyman Johnson, one of the 12 apostles, withdrew from them, and they tried to kill him; they fired thirteen guns at him while he was leaving. In haste,  
W. PARRISH.

To E. HOLMES.

(*The Evangelist* 6 [Oct. 1, 1838]:226-27, Carthage, Ohio)

September 9, 1838 to Asahel Woodruff

[page 1:]

Kirtland Sunday 9th Sept 1838  
Mr. Woodruff  
DrSir

Yours of Aug. 3<sup>d</sup> has been Recd. & I now proceed to answer it which I should have cheerfully done some two weeks earlyer than this had not our intelligence from Mo. concerning Mormon matters been of such an interesting nature, that I thought it worth while to delay, in hope that something of a decisive character might be obtained respecting the great excitement that prevails in upper Mo. on account of some recent measures that have been taken in that vicinity not only among the Mormons, but among the citizens also.

We have been authentically informed by information from various sources that there has been a fight in Davis Co. Mo. between the citizens & Saints & that the latter were the first aggressors, that

state

it was at a ^ election, held on the 6th Aug. that none were killed but a number were wounded, -- that J. Smith Jr. & some other leading men, followed by about 120 desiples well armed surrounded the house of a Magistrate & compelled him on pain of death to sign a writing the purport of which he did not know neither have we as yet been able to asertaine; that about 500 Mormons were organized & well armed, who were going through the county to force every man to Sign said writing.—That Smith is teaching them, that Mohammed sust-ained & proprogated his religion by the Sword & that he can his, that Mohammed was a true prophet &c.

[page 2:]

Also that “one can chase a 1000. & two put 10,000 to flight” & that in case of necessity God will send down legions of angels to their assistance. – And old gentleman in this place of respectability has just returned from a visit at Far West Mo. who is a member of the church & has been almost from its commencement who was a man of property, & took Smith & Rigdon into his own house, in the early part of their Mormon career & treated them with all the tenderness of

(the mormons)

a brother;- or- even a parent, when they ^ were but a handful in number, & despised & hated, he has lent his name with ~~their~~ them in their speculations, to his ruin.

When on the visit alluded to they made further demands upon him, which he refused to comply with, for which he was mobbed & his life threatened, by the [illegible] of Smith & Rigdon, & was obliged to flee for his life. – Smith boasts of having at his command as good, an inquisition as any pope ever had. – Secret measures were adopted, before Smith left this place to destroy the inhabitants of Jackson co. Mo. to my certain knowledge, if the confessions of those who were among the chosen [illegible] to accomplish it, are to be credited. – A man formerly one of the 12. Apostles of the latter days, Son of the old gentleman spoken of above was compelled to flee from Zion, this season because he took exceptions to their proceedings & hardly escaped with his life, was fired at 13, times before he had rode a mile from the City, by men in disguise, some of  
not withstanding  
whom he knew, ^ to be men in high standing in the church; -- Rigdon in a public discourse, (backed up by Smith,) said that dissenters were like the salt that had lost



[page 3:]

its savour, good for nothing but to be cast out & troden under the feet of men, & like the hand, or eye that had offended; that these sayings were to be litterally fulfilled upon dissenters by the saints, that they (dissenters) were not fit to live, that God always make use of his servants, as his ministers of destruction, that when Ananias & Saphira fell down dead, at the Apostles feet, that it was, because the Apostles killed them, that in the New Testament the story is not all told in relation to such circumstances but they obtain, it by revelations direct from heaven. – Also that Peter killed Judas, or followed him out into the field, & while he was filled with grief, knocked him down & his bowels gushed out, &c. – On about the 10th Aug. a State warrant was issued, by the circuit Judge, in Ray Co. for Smith, & Wight, the leaders of the insurrection alluded to above, the [—] result, we are waiting with deep anxiety to asertain, what course he will take, I am at a loss to determine, I think he will fight, I understand he says he will resist unto death, & hundreds of his delude followers, are sworn to defend him under any circumstances, aright or wrong. – Publick meetings, & measures have been, called & adopted in several of those adjoining Counties, -- what the end will be is for [illegible] to disclose, I fear the inocent will suffer with, the guilty, I hope not. – these, & many things of a like nature which, have been developed, within two years past, which the narrow limits of a sheet [illegible] an [illegible], I think will answer your inquiry, as to my unbelief in “the [illegible] character of Smiths ministry”

With Sentiments of Respect

I Am Sir Your obt. Servt.

W. Parrish

[page 4:]

- Further – reasons for believing Joseph Smith Jr. not to be what he professes to be, to wit. a prophet of God
- 1<sup>stly</sup> I do not believe that God, inspires a man to lie, swindle, cheat & defraud, which [—] I believe him to be guilty of, doing, & that under the sacred garb of religion, [illegible] doubly efficient ~~by~~ by the authority of the High priesthood which he claimed to be in possession of & by his prophetick pretentions –  
God
- 2<sup>ndly</sup>. I do not believe that ^ Inspires a man to act in all respects just like the devil.
- 3<sup>rdly</sup>. A man who claims to be the only individual upon the face of all the earth, that is called of God to dictate rules of faith & practice to all mankind, ought to be the most exemplary, in his daily walk, & conversation, & in short, he ought be most like God himself

(Wilford Woodruff Collection, MS 5506, Images 526-529, LDS Church History Library)

Note:

“Lyman Johnson, one of the 12 apostles, withdrew from them, and they tried to kill him; they fired thirteen guns at him while he was leaving.”

Letter, Warren Parrish to E. Holmes, August 11, 1838, *The Evangelist* 6 (October 1, 1838):226-27, Carthage, Ohio.

1842

MASSILLON, July 31, 1842.

DEAR SIR,—

Prof. Wm. M. Smith, M. D., informed me, that you passed through this place on Friday last, on your way to New York, to make an exposition of that infamous scoundrel, Joe Smith, and others connected with him, in their piracy upon the human family. I am exceedingly sorry, sir, that I could not have had an interview with you upon this subject, for, be assured, I consider any means which can be adopted to bring such a ruthless ruffian to justice, as most laudable, and not only worthy the attention but imperatively demanded at the hands of him who may be in possession of facts that will enable him to accomplish that object. I am, however, aware, that the man who attempts it, puts his life in competition with a secret influence of the most dangerous, dark, and damning kind, that may be brought to bear upon him, at times and places, and under circumstances least anticipated,—an influence that can be known only by those who have had the means of

knowing that we have, and which it is hard to make others believe exists in an enlightened community.

I have known you by reputation for some time, but have not the pleasure of your acquaintance personally; have said but little upon the subject of your connection with the Prophet, but have thought much, and am not disappointed in the issue.

You, no doubt, have learned, in your close connection with Joe, the position I occupied in his cabinet; and let me inquire what his present feelings are toward me? My life was sought for a time; how is it now? I was once a peculiar favorite of the Prophet and rulers in Israel, called to be his scribe by revelation, wrote his early history, kept his daily journal, superintended his mercantile, land, and banking speculations, under his directions.

I joined the Church in 1833, and withdrew in 1837, at the head of some forty others, and shortly after was excommunicated by a Bull from his Holiness; and not long after that, I made Kirtland, the stake of Zion, so exceedingly unpleasant to him, that he got a revelation to leave between two days, and has not been there since.

I lectured against them in the Temple, twice a week, during the season; once his lickskillets attempted to expel me by force from the sanctum sanctorum, but did not succeed. At about that time, their printing-office fell into our hands, which, if they had not consumed by fire, would soon have been speaking the truth as an atonement for an ill-spent life. Before I left them, those that were disaffected, met frequently, and consulted upon the matter, and many of the first in official stations of the Church, were convinced of the abominations of our leader, as well as myself, and so expressed themselves in our private councils, to wit, Bishop Whitney, Orson Hyde, Parley P. Pratt, Orson Pratt, Doctor Williams, Cahoon, and others, but had not the moral courage to come out publicly. By the by, have Orson Pratt and Rigdon left them, as you intimated in your communications? Please write me who among the leaders have left, and what the prospects are for breaking them up. Can it be done? Be assured, sir, I would most cheerfully assist you in this laudable undertaking, were I situated so that I could. But I do not see how I can possibly, at this time, come to New York.

My professional business, I suppose, I might leave, as I have a partner in Canton; but I am concerned in a mercantile establishment in this place also, and my partner is absent, and will be for a month at least.

At the time I left the Church, I wrote, by way of exposition, several newspaper articles; and the expectations of the public were highly raised in anticipation that I intended to publish a book, although I did not pledge myself, but intended to publish a weekly periodical of that character, and should have done so, had not our printing-office been burnt.

I am, no doubt, in possession of some facts that you are not; and were I so situated that I could, I would join you in New York, and assist in your publication.

Your obedient servant,

W. F. PARRISH.

GENERAL J. C. BENNETT, New York.

(John C. Bennett, *History of the Saints* [Boston: Leland & Whiting, 1842], 46-48, quotation marks and italic words omitted.)