

CHAPTER 15

FREE MASONRY AND THE BOOK OF MORMON

In his second booklet, "Additional Studies in Mormonism and Masonry," the author devotes the entire review, a book of twenty-eight pages, to consideration of one particular thought, which to him, he says, has become a certainty, viz.: That it was the environment by which Joseph Smith was surrounded between the years 1826 and 1830 that gave him the material which he used in the production of the Book of Mormon.

In justification of his conclusion he recites at length the circumstances which prevailed in the western part of the state of New York during the period referred to above, which resulted in a great uprising of the people in opposition to Freemasonry, because of the unaccounted-for disappearance of William Morgan, a Mason, and the accusation that he had been done to death by fellow Masons because of his intention to publish a book exposing the secrets of the Masonic Fraternity. Referring to this incident the author of "Mormonism and Masonry" says:

"Morgan appears to have been of the rolling stone variety, a sort of ne'er-do-well. He is said to have followed a variety of vocations to gain a livelihood. At some point in his career he became a Mason. It appears that Morgan had not been long in Batavia when the information was noised abroad that he had in

preparation and was about to publish a book which would disclose the secrets of Freemasonry. There was a great heat and intemperance of expression in relation to the expected work, and an open avowal by members that it should never see the light.

"In September, 1826, Morgan was forcibly taken from Canandaigua—where he had been placed in jail for debt—by a few misguided members of the Craft, carried to Fort Niagara, a hundred miles or more from his home in Batavia, and ferried across the river to the Canadian side. Soon after he returned to the Fort where it is said he was known to have been as late as September 19. He then disappeared, and no subsequent search succeeded in establishing his whereabouts. The popular belief was that Morgan was put to death by Masons.

"Following the disappearance of Morgan and his failure to return to his family in Batavia stories began to circulate of alleged incidents connected therewith, and rumors multiplied concerning the reasons for his forceful removal. Conditions were ripe for the unusual—all that was required was the initial impulse and this was supplied in the mystery attending the disappearance of the author of 'Illustrations of Masonry.' . . . "Masons, among them men who had been highly honored by the Craft, swept from their feet by the storm, renounced all connection with the institution, publicly wiped the stain of Masonry from their skirts, and soon were lined up with those who denounced and reviled the Order which, up to that time, they had held in highest esteem."

"Events and activities multiplied incredibly, all of which were calculated to further inflame the passions, and to solidify antagonism to Masonry. . . . As a sample of the lot here is part of a letter (italics and all) which appeared in one of the newspapers about a year after Morgan had disappeared: 'The Lodge chapter in this (Batavia) and other places,' declares the writer, 'acted in concert, and under directions of the Grand Lodge and the Grand Lodge did cast lots who should come out and dispatch Morgan and Miller if necessary to suppress the development of Masonic secrets.' And this was written by a seceding Mason.

"Before the biting fury of this storm hundreds of Masons scurried like rats from a sinking ship; lodges went down like block houses, even Grand Lodges in some states ceased to exist, or entirely suspended labor.

"Enough has been said, it would seem, to convince the impartial student of that particular period that it is entirely improb-

able that one who lived in the very thick of such intense, prolonged and volcanic excitement, unparalleled in our history, an excitement from which none was immune; which left no interest or institution untouched, or as it was before, and which entered with the most unhallowed tread the most sacred precincts and scattered devastation wherever it came, it is not only improbable but incredible, that the Mormon Prophet alone, of all the people of that region, escaped unaffected by the anti-Masonic upheaval.

"That he did not constitute an exception in this respect the Book of Mormon itself, more particularly the first edition, furnished most conclusive proof."

The author here proceeds to quote copiously from the charges made against Masons during the discussion of the Morgan episode, calling special attention to the fact that Masons were accused of administering oaths to their members, and that this word "oaths" is frequently repeated in the Book of Mormon, that he finds there the terms murders, robbery, plunderings and wickedness, abominations, secret abominations, murder, the maladministration of the law, because of the secret methods by which officials were chosen for office; in fact, that Freemasonry was made to appear by its opponents to be a veritable Pandora's box, without so much as one redeeming feature.

He then calls attention to the fact that the references to secret oath-bound societies which appear in the Book of Mormon and which are excoriated by the author, Joseph Smith, have reference to Freemasonry, and that the terms so often used in the text, being the same as those used in the Morgan controversy, were adopted by Joseph Smith because of his familiarity with Freemasonry, and made a part of the record

which he translated, and were deliberately intended to prejudice readers against the Masonic fraternity.

Permit the writer to quote again from "Mormonism and Masonry."

"Abominations was another word early seized upon and re coined in the mint of anti-Masonry. . . . The frequent recurrence of this word in passages in the Book of Mormon affords another illustration of Joseph Smith's reaction to his surroundings. In a single chapter it occurs eight times, in as many verses, and nearly always linked with other words descriptive of heinous doings, as murders and robbings, and plunderings and wickedness and abominations. Wo unto you because of that great abomination which has come among you, and, Ye have united yourselves unto it, yea, to that secret band which was established by Gadianon."

"The Mormon Church, organized in 1830, is based upon the Book of Mormon; and for this and the other standard works of the Church, all of which are the veritable word of God, and which beyond dispute inculcate opposition to secret societies, Joseph Smith was primarily and immediately responsible.

"The Latter-day Saints organization is opposed to secret societies because, among other reasons: They are of the evil one. Satan was the originator of secret societies . . . revelation has condemned them, a prophet of God has emphatically raised his voice against these institutions, which threaten the liberties of all people and portend the destruction of whatever nation fosters them."

I

THE RELATIONSHIP OF THE BOOK OF MORMON TO FREEMASONRY

As stated, Joseph Smith was born at Sharon, Windsor County, Vermont, December 23, 1805.

He was not the author of the Book of Mormon, but simply the translator of the record which came into his hands as shown in his own words.

That the Book of Mormon was copyrighted in

the name of Joseph Smith is true, a precaution which was necessary to protect its publication.

It will be observed that it was in 1820, six years before the disappearance of Morgan, and the anti-Masonic crusade to which reference is made in "Mormonism and Masonry" that Joseph Smith, who at the time was in his fifteenth year, received his first heavenly manifestation.

A period of three years elapsed between this first vision and the appearance of Moroni, a heavenly messenger, who communicated to him the existence of the plates containing the record from which the Book of Mormon was translated. The day after the visitation of Moroni Joseph Smith visited the place where the plates were deposited, lifted the lid from the stone receptacle which contained them, and for the first time gazed upon the plates as well as the breast plate, and the Urim and Thummim.

This occurred three years before the Morgan incident, and the anti-Masonic crusade which followed.

It is true that during the period of the translation and publication of the Book of Mormon Morgan disappeared. It is also true that the author of "Mormonism and Masonry" does not show that Joseph Smith, or any one of those who were directly associated with him in the translation and publication of the book ever attended an anti-Masonic meeting, had any knowledge whatever of the ritual of the Masonic fraternity, or participated in the most remote manner in the crusade which followed the disappearance of

Morgan and consequently could not have made Masonry the basis upon which the book was written.

The author of "Mormonism and Masonry" is certainly aware that the expressions to which he calls attention, and which he avers refer to Freemasonry, did not have their origin with those who opposed Masonry on account of the Morgan incident. They were in use ages before, are now in use, and are very applicable to some of the conditions which prevail among us at the present time.

He repeatedly refers to the Book of Mormon as Joseph Smith's Golden Bible, and says: "The Mormon Church as organized in 1830, is based on the Book of Mormon."

Mention is made of the first edition of the Book of Mormon, with the inference that changes have been made in the text in later editions.

The writer of this treatise was a member of the committee which prepared for publication the latest edition of the Book of Mormon published. We had before us all of the editions of the book that have been issued, including the first. While some changes were made in punctuation, arrangement of chapters, etc., the greatest care was exercised that there might be no deviation from the text or meaning of the first edition printed. The inference that such changes had been made is misleading.

The Book of Mormon is not a Golden Bible. It does not supersede the Bible, nor take its place. The Bible contains the sacred history of the ancient in-

habitants of the Old World, and the ministry of Christ our Lord among them.

The Book of Mormon contains the history of the Jaredite and Nephite peoples, ancient inhabitants of America, and the ministry of Jesus Christ among them.

The Book of Mormon contains no authority to organize the Mormon Church as it now exists. Such authority could only be conferred as it was restored, viz.: by the personal administration of one holding the authority of the priesthood.

This authority came through the ministration of heavenly messengers, who conferred both the Melchizedek and Aaronic priesthood upon Joseph Smith and others. It was by this authority that the Church was organized, and continues to exist.

The relationship of the Book of Mormon to the Bible and evidences of its divine authenticity will be more comprehensively discussed in later chapters when it will be shown that the references to secret oath-bound societies which existed among the ancient inhabitants of America have no application whatever to Freemasonry.

Many uncomplimentary things have been said of Joseph Smith, but among them all nothing more unkind or unjustifiable than to say that he became a member of the Masonic Fraternity, in which he rose to the rank of Grand Master, and this in an organization which the author of "Mormonism and Masonry", would have us believe before he associated himself

with it he had declared had its origin from the evil one.

II

WHY DID JOSEPH SMITH BECOME A MASON

From "Mormonism and Masonry" we quote as follows:

"The Mormon Church, organized in 1830, is based upon the Book of Mormon; and for this and for other standard works of the Church all of which are the veritable word of God, and which beyond dispute inculcate opposition to secret societies, Joseph Smith was primarily responsible. Yet Joseph Smith himself became a Mason—*Why?*"

The author of "Mormonism and Masonry" makes no effort to answer his own question.

He says:

"To be sure all these references to secret societies in the Book of Mormon appear under the transparent disguise of an American society which operated, it is said, among the early progenitors of the Mormon faith, but the real sources of these passages cannot be successfully controverted." (See "Mormonism and Masonry," Book 2, pp. 25-27.)

The author well knows that the Book of Mormon has no reference to the progenitors of the Mormon faith, but deals exclusively with the ancient inhabitants of America, the progenitors of the American Indians.

The progenitors of the so-called Mormon faith were Christ our Lord and those who followed after him and the founders of the Church in the present

dispensation were almost without exception people from New England and adjacent states, whose ancestors gave their lives for the establishment of our system of government, and whose descendants have defended it until the present moment, and will be found among its defenders when carping religious bigots, and frenzied politicians will quail before the test of loyalty which is yet to come.

From the time of his first heavenly manifestation Joseph Smith was persecuted, reviled, ridiculed and hated. His only friends were the few devoted men and women who recognized in him a chosen instrument, raised up by God our Father for the accomplishment of a divine purpose.

Charged with offenses against the civil law he was never found guilty of an unlawful act. Accused of perverting the word of the Lord as it is contained in the Bible, *it cannot* be shown that he ever taught a doctrine which is not in harmony with the teachings of that sacred volume. He was imprisoned and condemned to death when he had committed no offense against God or man.

If ever a man was in need of sympathy and the friendship of good men, that man was Joseph Smith. It was under these circumstances that Joseph Smith became a member of the Masonic Fraternity. He hoped to find there the friendship and protection which he so much craved, but which had been denied him outside of his few devoted adherents. The sequel proved that he was mistaken.