

Bill, here is an example of some of the news items I have found. It is a page from a Mormon newspaper account of their elders encountering ours. If you read between the lines you can gather a fairly significant amount of information from this article. Firstly, the Mr. O_ that is referred to in the article is none other than our Elder Frank Osborn I mentioned in a previous letter, the same who was baptized the same day as Bro. Jim Caldwell. Notice in the article it mentions that the people of that vicinity, they were largely brethren, I have other proofs of that, are from Illinois, Missouri, and Kansas. That is the migration pattern of the faith. Elias Brewer and McDonald preached in Illinois, Frank Osborn's parents as well as other family members remained there. McDonald and Reece preached in Missouri and then Kansas. At the time Oklahoma opened up many brethren from Kansas settled in different parts. The brethren knew the Mormons were holding meeting and used the opportunity to show their neighbors the difference in their doctrines. The brethren for years had been accused of being a sect of Mormonism when it was actually the other way around. Bro. Jacob McDonald grew up in Oneida county, NY just a few miles down the road from Joseph Smith, the founder of Mormonism. My grandmother when I was young used to tell me that when she was young growing up, she had always heard that Joseph Smith's family belonged to the faith, but he had become a false prophet. This letter seems to vindicate that tradition. It seems that the initial converts to Mormonism were some of the brethren, and so there was bad blood so to speak between the groups.

I think that there is a relationship between the two groups, there are too many similarities in early doctrine and geography for there not to be. Outside sources seem to lump the brethren together with the Mormons, as in Hazelrigg's journal. Mormon sources, such as this letter seem to admit the brethren had "traditions" concerning the Mormons. Traditional stories the older Members of the Church I grew up around included stories that Joseph Smith was a false prophet who originated with the brethren.

That there existed a relationship seems at least in my mind nearly certain, but the evidence indicates that the Mormon "underpinnings" are COTFB rather than the other way around. Two of the greater facts that support this can be found in the Mormon letter itself: 1) COTFB never accepted "Old Joe" as a prophet or his writings. ; 2) The COTFB actively opposed the Mormons whenever they had opportunity, taking it often times to a personal level.

It seems that there were about 3 exodus' of brethren who defected to the Mormon cause, which may account for some of the bad blood. In the early 1830s the Smith's and other early Mormons such as Parley Pratt made deliberate efforts to disrupt the brethren's meetings and take followers with them, the brethren were even singled out for this to the exclusion of other denominations. This tactic could have only worked for the Mormons, and apparently it did, if there was already at least some initial connection between them. It would be like a COTFB heretic today trying first to gather support from his own family and congregations. Again in the 1840s it seems the brethren made up some ground and may have reclaimed some of the dissenters, but in the 1850s the Mormons again swayed many of the brethren to their cause, only this time it was not the major LDS but the reformed LDS which did so. This would have happened primarily in Wisconsin and

Illinois and it seems that that may have been the reason the brethren initially migrated to Missouri and Kansas. Then once more in the 1880s we find some families of the COTFB defecting to them and migrating to Oregon. This would have only occurred a handful of years before the confrontation with the Mormon elders and it involved specifically a brother to the Elder Osborn who challenged them.

What is interesting here is that 3 scriptural subjects seem to be the points of contention and another is of a completely other nature.

Concerning the nature of God of course the Followers were completely adhering to scripture, "God is a Spirit." Mormon theology is based on the writings of Joseph Smith and he says, "*God himself was once as we are now, and is an exalted man and sits enthroned in yonder heavens. . . .I say, if you were to see him today, you would see him like a man in form-like yourselves in all the person, image and very form as a man. "*

Concerning the difference between faith and works, the Followers were probably attacking what they viewed as an attempt by Mormonism to subjugate everyone to a new temple system replete with an enforced term of missionary activity, temple ordinances, and tithing, all echoes of the Old Testament way of doing business. I am thinking these are the works they were contending about when proclaiming we are "Saved by Grace". This probably is why the Mormon elders mention that the Followers do not use the Old Testament, of which point I think they were in error. As to the texts being used being New Testaments that was pretty much the custom in those days, where bibles were still relatively expensive and bulky.

The last scriptural contention has a historical twist to it. The Mormons in the period of the 1830s initially claimed the "signs of the believers" for themselves but noticeably refrained from handling serpents or drinking poison. There are a handful of absolutely fraudulent miracles and healings attempted that were humorously exposed in their day. I have a small collection of some of these episodes. One which sticks out is that one of the first few Mormons, a Mr. Harris that in fact financially backed the initial printing of the *Book Of Mormon* and was represented as one of the witnesses to the Golden Plates, preached that the Mormon's were the only men of faith who could confidently handle a poisonous serpent and remain unharmed. After a considerable time of exhorting like this a rattler was found, and Harris grabbed it! He did live to an old age, but neither he or the other Mormons advanced those signs any longer.. This man Harris was later rejected from the LDS for being of a "base nature" when he spoke against Mormonism and intimated fraud to some friends and family.

Now for the really personal aspect of it, the Followers referred to Joseph Smith as "Old Joe" which the Mormon elders took as a slight to their founder, but which I perceive from them was only meant to indicate a once forgotten personal knowledge of Joseph. Their letter even described that several in that neighborhood had come by way of Illinois to Missouri to there and carried with them "traditions...respecting Joseph the prophet

himself." I would imagine these young Mormon elders really did not even know themselves any one involved in their organization's foundation and yet here is a group of people that have personal stories of their own founder! The Mr O__ was undoubtedly Frank Marion Osborne, ordained an elder in Cowley Co., Kansas in 1878. Mr. B_ was a Bro. Brown who was a brother-in-law to the Keeseckers which owned the farm next to the school house. Marion Osborne came from a family of brethren that were in Illinois in the 1830s and 1840s at the same moment and place of the many Mormons (Joseph Smith was assassinated there). Osborne was baptized by Bro. McDonald who is not only of the same age as Joseph Smith, but grew up in the same place as he did in New York, though McDonald had passed on 3 years previous to this account. Bro. McDonald's father-in-law later left the faith for Mormonism (though a different sect of it) and some of Elder Osborn's family left the faith for it as well. There very well may have been some members of that community that had personal recollections of the Mormon founder, and either way the Followers had definite informative knowledge of them from the previous generation,

Bro. Darren

I realized after I sent it that you probably have no idea what I meant by "Hazelrig's Journal". Here is an excerpt from the journal of Charles Hazelrigg a minister of a different denomination (Campbellite Church of Christ).

Sunday, July 19th 1891.

I continued my meeting through the week closing last night. There were three additions last night, one by letter and two by statement. 5 It was thought best to close the meeting at present as the farmers are so busy and the roads badly washed out. Today was Bro. Whiles regular time for preaching. I was present and assisted in each service. In the afternoon went to a schoolhouse three miles south east of Payne to meet a Bro. Davis, who was announced, to preach. He very strongly urged on me to preach but I declined but gave a short talk after the sermon. He invited me to be with him next Sunday at his appointment near his home close to Perkins in the southeast part of the county. I promised to go. Our membership in this county is very strong. Some have said that we outnumber the combined strength of the denominations. Other places where I have been since I started in the ministry the Methodists took the lead but in this region they are greatly in the minority. There is a sect here known as "Followers of Christ." I think from their doctrine they are an off-shoot from the Latter Day Saints. The only difference between the two that I can find out is that the former does not recognize Joseph Smith as a prophet. Next to us in this immediate locality they stand as regards membership.