

could come sometime from September to May you would not need. I got permission from the Captain to go to New York on the Sabbath arrived about 1 o'clock P.M. It was with much trouble I found the saints. I was at the meeting in the afternoon. I told them who I was and from whence I came and whither I was going. Their hearts were filled with joy and their eyes with tears. They received us with all the care possible. All the company got in on Monday the 20th of July. We have had much affliction 'tis true more than I can describe but after all I do not know that I ever heard one word of murmuring in all our afflictions. We have all got over safe and in a state of tolerable health. I feel glad that we have got so far on our journey. I feel somewhat sorry for all those who have to come after us but keep up your hearts and as your day is so shall your strength be. You must expect great tribulation in the way to Zion for those who John saw had come through much tribulation and I do not know any way but one that leads to the kingdom of God. But I can say with truth that if things had been 10 times worse than they was I would just have gone right ahead through all. — We had 3 storms but the Prophecy of Er Kimball was fulfilled the winds and water was calmed by prayer and the power of God. In New York we can buy a large Loaf for 6 pence sugar 3-1/2 pence Butter 6 pence other things in like manner. Potatoes much like England in price and very good. Tea, Coffee & Spirits—very cheap. I have asked after Bro Garner but I can hear nothing of him. I have also asked after Bro Benbow but they have not seen him. There were ships that sailed 10 days before us and had not come in when we got to shore. One ship had been 90 days on the water. Many of her passengers was almost worn out and many dead. Sister Eaves was delivered of a Male child on June 22nd. It died on the 27th and was buried on the 28th. Love to all &c &c. Jno Moon

## HOWARD CORAY'S RECOLLECTIONS OF JOSEPH SMITH

Dean Jessee

So contradictory is the source material pertaining to Joseph Smith that serious students of the Prophet are forced to invest considerable time in checking its reliability. Although many witnesses claimed firsthand knowledge of Joseph Smith, careful consideration must be given to their competence to report what they claim to have observed. Among those who had more than a passing acquaintance with the Prophet was Howard Coray, a talented writer who was closely associated with Joseph Smith for a considerable period of

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time in the 1840s. Employed as a clerk in the Prophet's office, Coray had a particularly close vantage point from which to view his public and private activities. Important documents of the Nauvoo era in Coray's handwriting, such as the Prophet's letter book, patriarchal blessing records, and the history of Lucy Mack Smith, show the trust that was placed upon him and the quality of his work.

On at least two occasions, Coray wrote a short sketch of his life, both of which give details that are not in the other. Presented below are transcriptions of the two undated manuscripts in Coray's hand. The first is published in its entirety; the second is an extract from a more lengthy account. Together they give valuable insight to the personality of Joseph Smith and his method of doing things. Copies of the two documents are filed in the Church archives. The originals are in the possession of a Coray descendant, Jennie M. Weeks, of Salt Lake City. To distinguish the two documents I have arbitrarily titled them Coray Ms #1 and Coray Ms #2.

#### CORAY MS #1

I, Howard Coray, was born on the 6th day of May 1817 in the Township of Dansvill[e], Steuben County and State of New York. When I was about 10 Years of age, my father moved down to Pa. Luzern Co. and Township of Providence; in this State, we continued to reside until the fall of 1838, being then in my 22 year of age. At this time my father, hearing about what a beautiful country Illinois was— the lovely Praries &c &c, got the western fever; so about the first of Dec. he put \$1000.00 worth of Mdze. in his wagon and taking myself and my brother George, he started for the west: We reached Perry Pike Co. Ills. sometime in the following January; here we were brought face to face with Mormonism. The next spring, as those who were driven out of Mo. scattered about in Ills. seeking homes, or somewhere to live, I came in contact with them, and was anxious to know something about their faith; — I attended one of their meetings; & the man's name that preached, was Joseph Wood,— a very bright intelligent person;— he took for the foundation of his remarks this scripture: "The Priesthood being changed there is made of necessity also a change of the law"—: Well, he handled this scripture in such a manner as to make me wonder where he got his information:— he showed up in a masterly manner what the Priesthood had to be changed to, and all about it. This made me anxious to follow up Mormonism, and know all about it and what there [was] in it, so on the 25th of March 1840, I and my 2 brothers, Geo. & Wm were baptized by the said Joseph Wood. On the following April I went to Nauvoo to see the Prophet and attend Conference. It so transpired that I obtained an interview with him. After eyeing and questioning me a little, he asked me if I could



come and live [with] him and clerk for him; I replied in the affirmative; but desired to go home first which would take me about 2 weeks—he said; that would do: So in a couple of weeks, or such a matter I was on hand to go to work. Well, I went to work the next day after my arrival at his house. The first thing he gave [me] to do was to copy a large pile of letters into a Record. This labor was performed in his kitchen, having no other place at that time to do such business—

While thus engaged, I had many very precious opportunities—great and Small, almost every day, were calling on him, some for one thing, and some for another.—polititians and preachers and of different persuasions—some with the view of testing the depth of his knowledge and, if possible, confounding him and putting [him] to shame. Well, what did I discover—that he was equal to every occasion, that he had a ready answer for all questions. I heard him say that God had given him the key of knowledge by which he could trace any subject through all its ramifycations. I had heard it remarked that Joseph Smith was Sidney Rigdon's cat's paw: soon after he returned from the East he came to see Joseph, and the thought went through my mind: now I will see, who the cats paw is.—well, I did see; after passing the usual compliments, Rigdon said to Joseph:—“When I was preaching in Philadelphia after I had finished my discourse a man stepped up to me and desired me to explain something in John's Revelation, mentioning at the same time what it was)—“Well, I could not do it, how is it Joseph?” Joseph cited him at once right off hand to a passage in Ezekiel and something in some other book of the old Testament, saying that they explained all about it.” I thought to myself, that don't look much like Joseph's being a cats paw.

Stephen A Douglass called to see him and ask him some questions. One thing he desired to know, was how he managed to govern a people so diverse, coming from so many different countries with their peculiar manners and custims. “Well, he said “I simply teach them the truth, and they govern themselves,” was his ready answer. Among other great men who called to see him was Cyrus Walker—a lawyer of much note; he tried to sound the Prophet, and see how deep he was. Well, it was with Walker, as it had been with all the others, he soon got enough, found Joseph too deep for his lead and line, and gave up the enterprise. Thus it was in every instance that came under my observation: how could we expect it to be otherwise—for any man who had never peered into heaven and seen heavenly things, be a match for one who had had a half a score or more heavenly messengers for teachers.

I continued the work of copying his letters until I finished the same. He then desired me to write up the Church history, saying that he would furnish all the material. I declined telling him that I did not feel myself competent for such a work—he said, if I would undertake it, I would be thankful for it as long as I lived: having more confidence in him than I had in myself, I engaged in the busi-

ness of an historian. He placed in my hands some items and scraps of history for me to arrange cronologically and fix up as best I could. We had now moved into his new office—a two story building arranged to do the office work in the upper story. John C. Bennet was occupying a portion of the room engaged in writing the Nauvoo Charter: Joseph dictated much of the Charter. I could overhear the instructions he gave Bennett, and know it was gotten up mainly as Joseph required.

One morning, I went as usual, into the Office to go to work: I found Joseph sitting on one side of a table and Robert B. Thompson on the opposite side, and the understanding I got was that they were examining or hunting in the manuscript of the new translation of the Bible for something on Priesthood, which Joseph wished to present, or have read to the people the next Conference: Well, they could not find what they wanted and Joseph said to Thompson "put the manuscript one side, and take some paper and I will tell you what to write." Bro. Thompson took some foolscap paper that was at his elbow and made himself ready for the business. I was seated probably 6 or 8 feet on Joseph's left side, so that I could look almost squarely into Joseph's left eye — I mean the side of his eye. Well, the Spirit of God descended upon him, and a measure of it upon me, insomuch that I could fully realize that God, or the Holy Ghost, was talking through him. I never, neither before or since, have felt as I did on that occasion. I felt so small and humble I could have freely kissed his feet.

#### CORAY MS #2

On the 3d or 4th day of April, 1840, I set out with a few others for Nauvoo, for the purpose of attending conference, and to gratify a curiosity that I had to see the Prophet. Some time during the conference, I took occasion to visit him, in company with Joseph Wood. He introduced me to brother Joseph with something of a flourish, telling him that I was a collegiate from Jacksonville College. This was not true and was not authorized by me. The Prophet, after looking at me a little and asking me some questions, wished to know whether it would be convenient for me to come to Nauvoo, and assist, or rather clerk for him. As this was what I desired, I engaged at once to do so; and, in about 2 weeks thereafter, I was busily employed in his office, copying a huge pile of letters into a book—correspondence with the Elders as well as other persons, that had been accumulating for some time.

While I was employed in this manner, I had many valuable opportunities; the Prophet had a great many callers or visitors, and he received them in his office, where I was clerking—persons of almost all professions—Doctors, Lawyers, Priests and people seemed anxious to get a good look at what was then considered something very wonderful: a man who should dare to call himself a prophet, announce himself as a Seer and ambassador of the Lord.



Not only were they anxious to see, but also to ask hard questions, in order to ascertain his depth. Well, what did I discover? This, verily that he was always equal to the occasion, and perfectly master of the situation; and, possessed the power to make everybody realize his superiority, which they evinced in an unmistakable manner. I could clearly see that Joseph was the captain, no matter whose company he was in. Knowing the meagerness of his education, I was truly gratified, at seeing how much at ease he always was, even in the company of the most scientific, and the ready off hand manner in which he would answer their questions.

In the following June, I met with an accident, which I shall here mention: The Prophet and myself, after looking at his horses, and admiring them, that were just across the road from his house, we started thither, the Prophet at the same time put his arm over my shoulder. When we had reached about the middle of the road, he stopped and remarked, "brother Coray, I wish you was a little larger, I would like to have some fun with you." I replied, perhaps you can as it is,—not realizing what I was saying. Joseph, a man of over 200 lbs weight, while I scarcely 130 lbs, made it not a little ridiculous, for me to think of engaging with him in any thing like a scuffle. However, as soon as I made this reply, he began to trip me; he took some kind of a lock on my right leg, from which I was unable to extricate it; and throwing me around, broke it some 3 inches above the ankle joint. He immediately carried me into the house, pulled off my boot, and found, at once, that my leg was decidedly broken; then got some splinters and bandaged it. A number of times that day did he come in to see me, endeavoring to console me as much as possible. The next day when he happened in to see me after a little conversation, I said: bro. Joseph, when Jacob wrestled with the Angel, and, was lamed by Him, the Angel blessed him; now I think I am also entitled to a blessing. To this he replied: "I am not the Patriarch, but my father is, and when you get up and around, I'll have him bless you." He said no more for a minute or so, mean while looking very earnestly at me; then said, "Bro. Coray, you will soon find a companion, one that will be suited to your condition, and whom you will be satisfied with. She will cling to you, like the cords of death; and you will have a good many children." He also said some other things, which I can't so distinctly remember.

In nine days after my leg was broken, I was able to get up and hobble about the house, by the aid of a crutch and in 2 weeks thereafter, I was about recovered—nearly as well as ever—so much so that I went to meeting on foot, a distance of a mile. I considered this, no less than a case of miraculous healing. For, nothing short of 3 months, did I think it would be, ere I should be around again, on my feet, able to resume work.

I finished the job of copying letters. I was then requested by Bro. Joseph to undertake, in connection with E. D. Woolley, the compilation of the Church History. This I felt to decline, as writ-

ing books was something, in which I had had no experience. But Bro. Joseph insisted on my undertaking it, saying, if I would do so, it would prove a blessing to me as long as I should live. His persuasive arguments prevailed; and accordingly in a short time, Bro. Woolley and myself, were busily engaged in compiling the church history. The Prophet was to furnish all the materials; and our business, was not only to combine, and arrange in cronological order, but to spread out or amplify not a little, in as good historical style as may be. Bro. Woolley's education, not being equal to mine, he was to get the matter furnished him in as good shape as he could; and my part was to go after him, and fix his up as well as I could, making such improvement and such corrections in his grammar and style as I might deem necessary. On seeing his work, I at once discovered, that I had no small job on my hands, as he knew nothing whatever of grammar; however, I concluded to make the best I could of a bad job, and thus went to work upsetting and recasting; as well as casting out not a little. Seeing how his work was handled, he became considerably discouraged; and rather took offence at the way and manner in which I was doing things, and consequently soon withdrew from the business.

Immediately after Bro. Woolley left, I succeeded in obtaining the services of Dr. Miller, who had written for the press, and was considerably accustomed to this kind of business. Now I got on much better. I continued until we used up all the historical matter furnished us by the Prophet. And, as peculiar circumstances prevented his giving attention to his part of the business we of necessity discontinued our labors, and never resumed this kind of business again.

I next engaged in school teaching; which was my main avocation, for livelihood, while I resided in Nauvoo.

Subsequent, some three or four weeks, to getting my leg broke, & while at meeting, the blessing of the Prophet came into my mind, viz: "that I should soon find a companion, &c &c." So I thought I would take a square look at the congregation, and see who there was; that, possibly, the fair one promised me, might be present. After looking and gazing awhile at the audience my eyes settled upon a young lady, sitting in a one horse buggy. She was an entire stranger to me, and a resident of some other place. I concluded to approach near enough to her to, scan her features well, and thus be able to decide in my own mind, whether her looks would satisfy my taste. She had dark brown eyes, very bright and penetrating; at least they penetrated me; and I said to myself, she will do; the fact is, I was decidedly struck. After the dismissal of the meeting, instead of going for my dinner, I remained on the ground, and presently commenced promenading about, to see what I could see. I had not gone far, before I came square in front of the lovely Miss, walking arm in arm with a Mrs. Harris, whom I was well acquainted with. They stopped and Mrs. H. said, "Bro. Coray, I have the honor of introducing you to Miss Martha Knowlton, from Bear



Creek." I, of course, bowed as politely as I knew how, and she courtesied, and we then fell into, somewhat familiar conversation. I discovered at once, that she was ready, off hand, and inclined to be witty; also, that her mind took a wider range, than was common for young ladies of her age. This interview, though short, was indeed very enjoyable; and closed with the hope, that she might be the one, whom the Lord had picked for me; and thus it proved to be. I shall not go into all the details of our courtship; suffice it to say, every move I made, seem[ed] to count one, in the right direction. I let Bro. Joseph into the secret—showed him a letter that I had written, designed for her. He seemed to take uncommon interest in the matter, took pains to see her and talk with her about me, telling her that I was just the one for her. A few letters passed between us; I visited her at her home, proposed, was accepted; and, on the 6th day of February 1841, we were married at her father's house—Bro. Robt. B. Thompson performing the ceremony. I will say in this connection; that, what the Prophet said, in regard to the companion which I should soon find, has been fully verified. . . .

## TRUMAN COE'S 1836 DESCRIPTION OF MORMONISM

Milton V. Backman, Jr.

One of the most descriptive summaries of the early history of the Restored Church and concise analyses of the distinguishing beliefs of the Latter-day Saints written by a nonmember during the 1830s was prepared by Reverend Truman Coe, a Presbyterian minister who had lived among the Saints in Kirtland for about four years. Published in the 11 August 1836 issue of *The Ohio Observer*, this article aptly reflects the myths, facts, truths, and errors about the Mormons that were being circulated in Kirtland in the mid-1830s.

When Coe wrote this article, Latter-day Saints had not yet published a comprehensive history unfolding the major events which had occurred in the life of the Prophet Joseph Smith nor had he or other members produced an articles of faith to summarize many of the most significant characteristics of their theology. Although Oliver Cowdery had published in *The Latter Day Saints' Messenger and Advocate* in 1834 and 1835 accounts of some of the important events in Church history and had included descriptions of many of the distinguishing beliefs of the Latter-day Saints, Coe did not em-

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