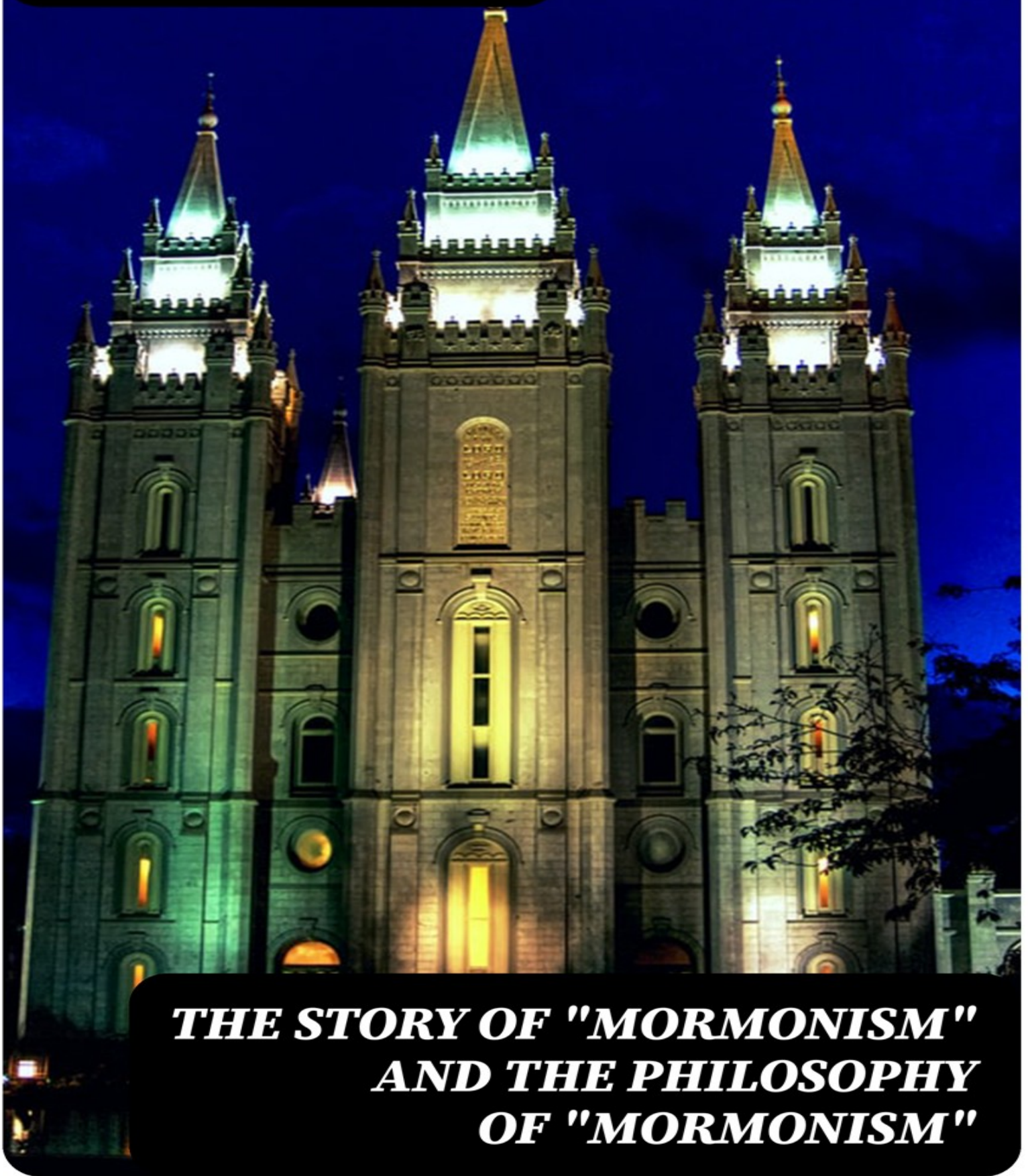


***JAMES
E. TALMAGE***



***THE STORY OF "MORMONISM"
AND THE PHILOSOPHY
OF "MORMONISM"***

James E. Talmage

The Story of "Mormonism" and The Philosophy of "Mormonism"

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PREFACE

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The Story of "Mormonism" as presented in the following pages is a revised and reconstructed version of lectures delivered by Dr. James E. Talmage at the University of Michigan, Cornell University, and elsewhere. The "Story" first appeared in print as a lecture report in the *Improvement Era*, and was afterward issued as a booklet from the office of the *Millennial Star*, Liverpool. In 1910 it was issued in a revised form by the Bureau of Information at Salt Lake City, in which edition the lecture style of direct address was changed to the ordinary form of essay. The present or third American edition has been revised and amplified by the author.

The "Story" has been translated and published abroad. Already versions have appeared in Swedish, modern Greek, and Russian.

The subject matter of *The Philosophy of "Mormonism"* was first presented as a lecture delivered by Dr. Talmage before the Philosophical Society of Denver. It appeared later in the columns of the *Improvement Era*, and translations have been published in pamphlet form in the Danish and German languages.

The present publication of these two productions is made in response to a steady demand.

THE PUBLISHERS.

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THE STORY OF "MORMONISM"

CHAPTER I

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In the minds of many, perhaps of the majority of people, the scene of the "Mormon" drama is laid almost entirely in Utah; indeed, the terms "Mormon question" and "Utah question" have been often used interchangeably. True it is, that the development of "Mormonism" is closely associated with the history of the long-time Territory and present State of Utah; but the origin of the system must be sought in regions far distant from the present gathering-place of the Latter-day Saints, and at a period antedating the acquisition of Utah as a part of our national domain.

The term "origin" is here used in its commonest application—that of the first stages apparent to ordinary observation—the visible birth of the system. But a long, long period of preparation had led to this physical coming forth of the "Mormon" religion, a period marked by a multitude of historical events, some of them preceding by centuries the earthly beginning of this modern system of prophetic trust. The "Mormon" people regard the establishment of their Church as the culmination of a great series of notable

events. To them it is the result of causes unnumbered that have operated through ages of human history, and they see in it the cause of many developments yet to appear. This to them establishes an intimate relationship between the events of their own history and the prophecies of ancient times.

In reading the earliest pages of "Mormon" history, we are introduced to a man whose name will ever be prominent in the story of the Church—the founder of the organization by common usage of the term, the head of the system as an earthly establishment—one who is accepted by the Church as an ambassador specially commissioned of God to be the first revelator of the latter-day dispensation. This man is Joseph Smith, commonly known as the "Mormon" prophet. Rarely indeed does history present an organization, religious, social, or political, in which an individual holds as conspicuous and in all ways as important a place as does this man in the development of "Mormonism." The earnest investigator, the sincere truth-seeker, can ignore neither the man nor his work; for the Church under consideration has risen from the testimony solemnly set forth and the startling declarations made by this person, who, at the time of his earliest announcements, was a farmer's boy in the first half of his teens. If his claims to ordination under the hands of divinely commissioned messengers be fallacious, forming as they form the foundation of the Church organization, the superstructure cannot stand; if, on the other hand, such declarations be true, there is little cause to wonder at the phenomenally rapid rise and the surprising stability of the edifice so begun.

Joseph Smith was born at Sharon, Vermont, in December, 1805. He was the son of industrious parents, who possessed strong religious tendencies and tolerant natures. For generations his ancestors had been laborers, by occupation tillers of the soil; and though comfortable circumstances had generally been their lot, reverses and losses in the father's house had brought the family to poverty; so that from his earliest days the lad Joseph was made acquainted with the pleasures and pains of hard work. He is described as having been more than ordinarily studious for his years; and when that powerful wave of religious agitation and sectarian revival which characterized the first quarter of the last century, reached the home of the Smiths, Joseph with others of the family was profoundly affected. The household became somewhat divided on the subject of religion, and some of the members identified themselves with the more popular sects; but Joseph, while favorably impressed by the Methodists in comparison with others, confesses that his mind was sorely troubled over the contemplation of the strife and tumult existing among the religious bodies; and he hesitated. He tried in vain to solve the mystery presented to him in the warring factions of what professed to be the Church of Christ. Surely, thought he, these several churches, opposed as they are to one another on what appear to be the vital points of religion, cannot all be right. While puzzling over this anomaly he chanced upon this verse in the epistle of St. James:

"If any of you lack wisdom, let him ask of God, that giveth to all men liberally, and upbraideth not; and it shall be given him."

In common with so many others, the earnest youth found here within the scriptures, admonition and counsel as directly applicable to his case and circumstances as if the lines had been addressed to him by name. A brief period of hesitation, in which he shrank from the thought that a mortal like himself, weak, youthful, and unlearned, should approach the Creator with a personal request, was followed by a humble and contrite resolution to act upon the counsel of the ancient apostle. The result, to which he bore solemn record (testifying at first with the simplicity and enthusiasm of youth, afterward confirming the declaration with manhood's increasing powers, and at last voluntarily sealing the testimony with his life's blood,) proved most startling to the sectarian world—a world in which according to popular belief no new revelation of truth was possible. It is a surprising fact that while growth, progress, advancement, development of known truths and the acquisition of new ones, characterize every living science, the sectarian world has declared that nothing new must be expected as direct revelation from God.

The testimony of this lad is, that in response to his supplication, drawn forth by the admonition of an inspired apostle, he received a divine ministration; heavenly beings manifested themselves to him—two, clothed in purity, and alike in form and feature. Pointing to the other, one said, "This is my beloved Son, hear Him." In answer to the lad's prayer, the heavenly personage so designated informed Joseph that the Spirit of God dwelt not with warring sects, which, while professing a form of godliness, denied the power thereof, and that he should join none of them.

Overjoyed at the glorious manifestation thus granted unto him, the boy prophet could not withhold from relatives and acquaintances tidings of the heavenly vision. From the ministers, who had been so energetic in their efforts to convert the boy, he received, to his surprise, abuse and ridicule. "Visions and manifestations from God," said they, "are of the past, and all such things ceased with the apostles of old; the canon of scripture is full; religion has reached its perfection in plan, and, unlike all other systems contrived or accepted by human kind, is incapable of development or growth. It is true God lives, but He cares not for His children of modern times as He did for those of ancient days; He has shut Himself away from the people, closed the windows of heaven, and has suspended all direct communication with the people of earth."

The persecution thus originating with those who called themselves ministers of the gospel of Christ spread throughout the community; and the sects that before could not agree together nor abide in peace, became as one in their efforts to oppose the youth who thus testified of facts, which though vehemently denounced, produced an effect that alarmed them the more. And such a spectacle has oftentimes presented itself before the world—men who cannot tolerate one another in peace swear fidelity and mutual support in strife with a common opponent. The importance of this alleged revelation from the heavens to the earth is such as to demand attentive consideration. If a fact, it is a full contradiction of the vague theories that had been increasing and accumulating for centuries, denying personality and parts to Deity.