

Excerpts from No Faith

Daniel [REDACTED]

Note from the author's sister:

Long before there was a CES Letter or Letter to my Wife, there was "No Faith" and similar compilations made by ex-Mormons as they began the journey down the exhaustive rabbithole that is Mormon history. These compilations can be as short as emails with 5 bullet points, or as long and complex as a publishable book, and are often used to explain to family members how we as faithful Latter-Day Saints can lose our faith (sometimes overnight), and why they should care.

Daniel considers his compilation to be unfinished and imperfect. It hasn't been thoroughly vetted, edited, or fact-checked in 2 decades. Thus, he hopes readers will appreciate these excerpts for what they are: one man's search for truth at the turn of a century.

The format is not unsimilar to Runnells' early CES Letter, and includes areas of extensive research, unanswerable questions, questions that may have been answered since this work was abandoned, and logical conclusions based on the principle of Occam's razor ("of two competing theories, the simpler explanation ... is preferred").

I honor my brother for being an early pioneer in our family and for leading the way in abandoning a 6-generation streak of toxic Mormon tradition. In many ways his example set me free and prepared my family for my own faith transition nearly twenty years later.

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Individuals who are interested in these topics should do their own research and are not permitted to use the following research without accreditation or permission. To contact the author's sister, please email [shesgoingtohell\[at\]gmail\[dot\]com](mailto:shesgoingtohell[at]gmail[dot]com).

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Foreword

When I originally pieced this research together, I did it partially with the intent of summarizing my findings and reasons for leaving the LDS Church, so that my own family (also members of the Church) could understand my decision. I later began a revision that would allow non-Mormons to understand things in context. I had taken for granted that readers would usually understand what I was referring to. In order to make this work easier for others to understand, I will include an extremely brief history of Mormonism that makes understanding my conclusions easier. Additionally, I will explain several of the books of Mormon origin that I quote.

Mormonism began with Joseph Smith. According to his own testimony later in life, he was visited in his “15th year” by God and Jesus Christ, and was instructed not to join any existing churches.^a Later, he would found Mormonism (1830), eventually naming the church, “The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints.”^b He claimed that the Church was a restoration of Christ’s gospel, which had fallen into apostasy shortly after His death and resurrection.^c This included restoration of the priesthood (the power to act in the name of God), the gifts of prophecy, visions and revelations. The power of revelation allegedly continues to this day, as the prophetic mantle is handed down through the years. The Church thus claims to be led directly by God, who does so by communicating with his prophets and apostles through revelation, visions, and prayer.

One of Joseph Smith’s great accomplishments was “translating” the *Book of Mormon*, which he claimed was a record of an ancient American civilization (populated by devout Jews who migrated from Jerusalem), originally inscribed on gold plates (given to Joseph by an angel). He also claimed to receive revelations on a regular basis, and many of these are recorded in what is now the *Doctrine and Covenants*. Near the end of his life, he claimed to translate Egyptian papyri, which he said were written by the

^a Joseph Smith, *History of the Church*, Volume I, 3-5

^b Faulring, *American Prophet’s Record*, 175. This was reproduced in D&C 115:3-4, but the spelling has been changed to “Latter-day” rather than “Latter Day.” The LDS Church now uses the former, but splinter groups, such as Strangites, use the latter.

^c Joseph Smith, *History of the Church*, Volume VI, 600

Old Testament prophet, Abraham. This “translation” is contained in a book known as *Abraham*, which is part of *The Pearl of Great Price*. The *Pearl of Great Price* also includes other works, most notably two excerpts from the *Joseph Smith Translation* of the *Bible*: an “inspired” work that Joseph did because he claimed much of the original *Bible* had been altered or deleted by translators.

The *Pearl of Great Price*, *Doctrine and Covenants*, *Book of Mormon*, and *Bible* constitute what Mormons refer to as the “standard works” (the *Bible* is only accepted “as far as it is translated correctly”^d). This is the official canon of the Church, although Mormons revere the words of all prophets as scripture.^e The Church believes that Joseph Smith was a prophet, that each of his successors was a prophet, and that a prophet leads the Church today. At any given time, there are also 12 apostles of the Church, which are considered “prophets, seers and revelators.” Many of the speeches of the “prophets” of the Church were recorded in the *Journal of Discourses*. This 26-volume set has proven to be embarrassing for the Church because certain “prophets” and “apostles” of the Church taught and believed strange things. Few members of the Church have ever read the set in its entirety (and most have read nothing but what the Church has selectively quoted), which is not surprising, considering its length. Thanks to a digital version, I have been able to search and selectively read many interesting passages.

Church historian B.H. Roberts compiled the *History of the Church* from several different sources, including newspapers, manuscripts written by Joseph Smith, notes taken by his scribes, and journals of prominent Church members. It was published in 1902 with explanatory notes from Roberts. Newspapers published by the Church include the *Evening and Morning Star* (1833-1834), the *Messenger and Advocate* (1835-1837), the *Times and Seasons* (1840-1846), and *Deseret News* (1850-present). Much of the *History of the Church* was taken from these newspapers, but in many cases I reference the originals for accuracy or because the originals contain texts not found in the *History*.

The RLDS (Reorganized LDS) church is a sect that separated itself from the Mormon (or LDS) church after the death of Joseph Smith, and was founded by some of his family who survived him. For this reason, the RLDS church often has access to, or owns original documents written by Joseph Smith. Occasionally, I quote from authorities in their church, simply because they can be more accurate on certain matters.

Throughout this work, I may use the following abbreviations: *BM* for *Book of Mormon*, *D&C* for *Doctrine and Covenants*, *HOTC* for *History of the Church*, *O.T.* for *Old Testament*, *N.T.* for *New Testament*, *JSH* for *Joseph Smith—History*, *JD* for the *Journal of Discourses*, *KJV* for the *King James Version* of the *Bible*, *RSV* for the *Revised Standard Version* of the *Bible* and *JST* for Joseph Smith’s translation of the *Bible* (never fully published by the Mormon Church). Unless otherwise specified, quotes from books of the *Bible* are taken from the *KJV*, and quotes from books of the *BM* are taken from the 1981 version of the *Book of Mormon*.

A word that is often applied to defenders of the Mormon Church (and other churches) is *apologist*. This may refer to a person that finds excuses and explanations for things that appear to contradict their belief system. However, the simple definition is “one who speaks or writes in defense of someone or something.”^f Throughout this

^d Article of Faith 8, *Pearl of Great Price*

^e Ezra Taft Benson, “Fourteen Fundamentals in Following the Prophet,” *Classic Speeches*, 17-27

^f Merriam-Webster Collegiate Dictionary

paper, I refer to Mormon apologists and scholars. Typically, I consider Mormon apologists those who are interested in making Mormonism seem credible (sometimes in ways that tends to ignore or play down facts), and Mormon scholars those who want to understand the facts better (and perhaps resolve those facts with their belief system). Scholars often conclude that the traditional Mormon views are flawed, but ultimately remain part of the Mormon faith.

Throughout this paper, I have made a habit of judging the Church based on its own standards. This may seem unduly harsh at times. For example, a church that claims to receive revelation directly from God should be expected to have prophets that give solid advice, and correctly anticipate the future. Certainly, I bear no ill will towards someone who has given many false predictions—such a person has simply made mistakes. On the other hand, a self-proclaimed prophet who makes the same mistakes must be judged by the standard he has set—he must be condemned for deceiving those who trust his words as those of deity. Thus, when judged by its own belief system, if Mormonism fails to be vindicated, it must surely be a false Church that is not managed by God.

Others have concerned themselves with judging the Church based on other standards, such as economic, legal or moral issues. I choose to avoid this, because such criticisms usually only appeal to outsiders. Mormons may acknowledge that some of their practices were illegal, or against mainstream beliefs (in many areas) about what is socially acceptable, yet still conclude that God instructed it. Thus, my purpose is not to condemn the Church based on the standards of the world, but to show the inconsistency required to believe all of its teachings. With this information, rational persons should have the ability to reject the illogical standards and choose new ones.

Because I judge the Church by what they have taught, at times it may seem that I am endorsing certain religious principles. This is simply my method in action. I speak of God freely throughout this paper, because the Church believes in and teaches that God leads them. This is not to say that I necessarily believe God exists, or leads any church. Thus, my arguments are implied to be hypothetical: if one accepts that God could lead a Church as the Mormons claim, do their actions seem reasonably in harmony with the God they maintain leads them?

Therefore, throughout this paper, I repeatedly compare Mormon views with Mormon views (taken from all of their “standard works,” writings, prophecies and teachings). My belief is that any contradiction between two of these views is extremely problematic for the Church. Once again, this does not imply, in any way, that I accept one of the contradictory beliefs as correct. I simply want to show that it is impossible to logically believe all of Mormonism’s teachings. The only belief of mine that I would expect a reader to understand and/or accept, is that the Mormon Church is not, nor has it ever been, what it claims to be.

If they accept this simple idea, readers must judge for themselves whether it is truly worthwhile to become or remain a member. I suggest that the Church (and other churches) might be beneficial for some, regardless of whether it actually contains the “truth” (although such a person might have to resort to feigning a belief to reap these benefits). On the other hand, if being a member seems to be an enormous sacrifice with little reward, discovering that the Church cannot offer eternal salvation might cause one to rethink his/her investment. I have no advice or recommendations for those who do—I only wish to present the facts, and allow each person to make his/her own decision.

Introduction

Up until this year, I had been a practicing Mormon (member of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints) since I was born. My study of the faith eventually resulted in a lack of belief in the basic doctrines of the LDS Church. As my convictions were slowly eroded by my own thinking and the research I did, I began to seriously question the point of being a member of the Church. Personally, I did not ever find the “enlightenment” that so many members talked about. My preliminary research led me to draw the conclusion that the Mormon leadership had intentionally glossed over important details in its history, and these details were extremely controversial. Combined with my growing doubts, this was too much for me. After a considerable period of time, in which I stopped attending all Church functions, I decided to officially leave the LDS Church. I am not sure why I chose to finalize my decision in this way; it just seemed like the honest thing to do. I finally admitted to myself that I did not have, and was not gaining a “testimony” of the Church; I could not resolve their beliefs with my way of thinking. To choose an example, I never could understand why prophets would contradict each other so obviously. Although human faults are understandable, these faults showed through even in the “revelations” they received. I have found that the teachings over the years are full of inconsistencies.

This paper is meant to explain why I no longer have faith in the teachings of Mormonism. Admittedly, in attempting to document the problems that I found with the LDS Church, my doubts have grown immensely. For a long time, I continued to add ideas that indicated to me the Church is not based on the truth. There are several significant areas that I would have liked to cover, but unfortunately many of these are beyond the scope of this work. It is certainly the case that many of the findings that convinced me to leave Mormonism have not been included in this paper. On the other hand, I believe the information given here is sufficient to convince anyone who is open to the possibility that the LDS Church is not of God.

Although I have read both sides of the debate in my search, I continue to believe that the Church is a hoax. The dedication of Mormon scholars/apologists is often very impressive, but their methods are faulty. It is my honest opinion that they choose only to focus on evidence that supports their claim. Hugh Nibley (a Mormon apologist) has done a tremendous amount of work trying to link the “translations” of Joseph Smith to

ancient times. I believe that if Smith's translations were authentic, it would not take so much work to prove it. Nibley, when faced with the fact that the *Book of Abraham* was not an authentic translation of the papyri, postulated that there was a "hidden" meaning in the document—he had to abandon the line of reasoning that led him to a conclusion he did not like. Apologists defended the *Salamander Letter*—which linked the Church to the occult—by suggesting that referring to Moroni (allegedly an angel) as a salamander was not only in harmony with Joseph's story, it confirmed it. But, the letter was a forgery that Mark Hoffman designed *with the purpose* of linking the Church to the occult. When a fake piece of evidence—concocted to discredit the Church—is hailed as vindicating proof, it reveals a disturbing trend among the apologists. Even (especially) after reading the "proofs" given by apologists, I do not agree that logical and scientific reasoning can be resolved with Mormon claims.

Non-Mormons, who have nothing to gain by attacking the Church, do not come to the same conclusions as the apologists. The scientific method leads them to disagree with Mormon claims. In reality, the only scholars that ever produce anything that vindicates that Church's incredible claims are Mormons who are searching for this very material. I cannot help concluding that they ignore mountains of evidence that do not support their claims. Diligent scientists are not hampered by a desire to prove a claim with little backing. Instead, they look at the evidence and come to a conclusion. Apologists work backwards—they start with the conclusion that the Church is true and try to find evidences that support it. Certain apologists, even while using these methods, have eventually accepted the fact that the evidences do not support the *Book of Mormon* (e.g., Thomas Ferguson).

There are many areas of thought that disagree with science. Almost universally, the people involved have a dogma to which they hold. This dogma allows them to somehow ignore all evidence refuting their claims, as if a conspiracy existed to undermine the "truth." The *Flat Earth Society* and Creationists (especially "young earth" Creationists) are just two examples of such groups. Mormons do not quite fit in this category, because they often change their thinking to agree with science (i.e., early Church leaders condemned the idea of evolution^a—now it is taught at BYU). Still, they have a faulty methodology—they assume Mormonism is true, and try to think of a way to resolve their scientific beliefs with this assumption. If the facts do not support it, they feel more research needs to be done. I have difficulty thinking in this way.

I believe that there are religions in which people aren't concerned with whether the message is perfect, or whether God speaks to its leaders. The Mormon Church, however, makes those claims, but doesn't live up to them. When I left the Church, I felt that it made no sense to be a Mormon just to be one; I considered it a requirement to believe it was true to honestly continue. Since then I have realized (due to having rejected the standards I learned as a Mormon) that such a decision is not necessary—one can still participate in the teachings of Mormonism without believing. However, as long as one's new standards precluded dishonesty, it would be a very difficult prospect to be a faithless Mormon.

The title of this work is meant to imply two things: I do not have sufficient "faith" to believe in Mormonism, and I do not choose to accept any particular "faith." For those who say that I lack faith, I agree! Faith can be described as a "firm belief in

^a Joseph Fielding Smith, *Doctrines of Salvation*, 142

something for which there is no proof.”^b Based on that definition, I consider it true that faith is required to believe in the LDS Church, or any other. With sufficient faith, any religion, line of thinking, or person can be believed. To Mormons who assert that I do not have enough faith to believe the “truth,” I respond that they do not have enough faith to become a Catholic, a Protestant, a Muslim, a Jew, or a member of any other denomination. Surely, with sufficient faith, they could believe the claims of these religions.

Faith and spiritual experiences exist in every religion. This, then, is not evidence that the organizations come from God, unless all do. Members of most religions find faith in other religions misplaced, and doubt the spiritual experiences in those other churches. What kind of faith is it that only allows belief in the religion one has chosen? Yet, this is exactly what members of the various “faiths” practice.

Hopefully, in this paper I will demonstrate that Mormonism has at least as many problems as any other religion. There are many members of the LDS Church who point out flaws in other religions in an attempt to undermine faith in their teachings. The teaching of the “great apostasy”^c (designed to discredit the Catholic Church, and any derived from it) is an excellent example. My studies have led me to believe that it requires at least as much “faith” to accept the dubious claims of Mormonism. At this point in time, in both senses of the word, I quite literally have “no faith.”

^b Merriam-Webster’s Collegiate Dictionary

^c Talmage, *The Great Apostasy*

Chapter 1

Elohim, Jehovah, and Plurality of Gods

The Mormon Church has some interesting beliefs about God that once made sense to me. As I studied the scriptures more, I realized that some of these beliefs were at odds with both the *Bible* and the *Book of Mormon*. Among the beliefs I have trouble accepting are the following: (1) That Jehovah and Elohim are two different people, and God the Father is named Elohim, while God the Son is named Jehovah; (2) That multiple Gods were involved in Creation, and that there is biblical support for this; (3,4) That *The Book of Abraham* or *The Book of Moses* accurately retell the *Genesis* account of Creation, or agree with Joseph Smith's teachings on plurality of Gods. The following sections contain references and my comments.

1) Are Jehovah and Elohim different persons? Is *elohim* a personal name?

The Mormon Church holds the view that *Jehovah* (*Yahweh*) is the name-title of God the Son (Christ), and *Elohim* is the name-title for God the Father.^a More specifically, they consider Christ to have been the acting God during Old Testament times, under the name Jehovah.^b I believe this view to be completely at odds with the *Old Testament's* use of the words *Jehovah* and *elohim*. In each quotation that follows, I have included the use of the Hebrew words *el*, *Jehovah*, and *elohim* by placing them in brackets after the English words chosen by the King James translators. The words in brackets were taken from *Strong's Exhaustive Concordance of the Bible*.

In the Old Testament, Jehovah often identified himself with the word *el* (translated *God* by the *KJV* scholars):

1). Genesis 17:1

And when Abram was ninety years old and nine, the LORD [Jehovah] appeared to Abram, and said unto him, I am the Almighty God [el]; walk before me, and be thou perfect.

2). Exodus 6:3

And I appeared unto Abraham, unto Isaac, and unto Jacob, by the name of God [el] Almighty, but by my name JEHOVAH was I not known to them.

If *el* were equivalent to *elohim*, these verses would imply that Jehovah and Elohim are the same person. I include these verses for completeness, because the *KJV* scholars translated three different Hebrew words as *God*. As this next verse shows, there seems to have been at least a slight distinction between the forms *el* and *elohim*. However, they do appear to refer to the same being.

3). Deuteronomy 7:9

Know therefore that the LORD [Jehovah] thy God [elohim], he is God [elohim], the faithful God [el], which keepeth covenant and mercy with them that love him and keep his commandments to a thousand generations;

In addition to using *el* and *elohim* interchangeably here, this verse also shows that the word *elohim* can refer to Jehovah. This raises some doubt about whether Jehovah and Elohim are two separate Gods, as Mormons believe. In fact, Jehovah is referred to as *elohim* on several occasions:

4). Deuteronomy 6:4

^a Joseph F. Smith, *Teachings of the Presidents of the Church: Joseph F. Smith*, Chapter 40.

^b Keith H. Meservy, "Lord = Jehovah," *Ensign*, June 2002, 29.

Hear, O Israel: The LORD [Jehovah] our God [elohim] is one LORD [Jehovah]:

5). Deuteronomy 4:35

Unto thee it was shewed, that thou mightest know that the LORD [Jehovah] he is God [elohim]; there is none else beside him.

It is interesting to note that (5) also claims that Jehovah is the only *elohim*. This makes it hard to imagine how *elohim* could refer to a different person than Jehovah, who is also a God. It is much easier to believe that the Jewish religion consisted of believing in one God, who was named Jehovah. The use of the word *elohim* (and *el*) in these verses also seems a bit impersonal, implying that it probably was not a name at all. In fact, there are other verses that further promote such an idea:

6). Exodus 12:12

For I will pass through the land of Egypt this night, and will smite all the firstborn in the land of Egypt, both man and beast; and against all the gods [elohim] of Egypt I will execute judgment: I am the LORD [Jehovah].

7). Exodus 20:2-3

I am the LORD [Jehovah] thy God [elohim], which have brought thee out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of bondage.
Thou shalt have no other gods [elohim] before me.

8). Exodus 20:23

Ye shall not make with me gods [elohim] of silver, neither shall ye make unto you gods [elohim] of gold.

In these three verses, it becomes clear that the word *elohim* is not limited exclusively to Jehovah, or God the Father. It seems to be a generic word that means *god*. It is used in these verses to refer to the false gods of Egypt (6), any god other than Jehovah (7), and gods (idols) made of earthly materials (8). If the term can be used to refer to these gods, it should not be surprising that it was also used to refer to Jehovah, the god of the Jews. However, it does seem to undermine the theory that *elohim* is the name of any god, let alone God the Father.

One should keep in mind that the phrase “LORD God” appears over 500 times in the *Old Testament (KJV)*. Translated word for word, it reads “Jehovah elohim.” “Jehovah” is clearly a name.^c “Elohim” is not—it is a generic term that means “God.” It is used even when referring to false gods (e.g., “Ye shall not make with me elohim of silver....”).

The use of capitalization also indicates use of the word *Jehovah*. In the *KJV*, the uncommon form “Lord GOD,” is a translation of “adonai Jehovah,” while the pervasive form “LORD God” is a translation of “Jehovah elohim.” Thus, the capitals in the *KJV* always indicate “Jehovah.” *Adonai* is a generic term that means “Lord,” as *elohim* is one

^c Exodus 6:3

that means “God.” Thus, Jehovah is referred to as either “Lord Jehovah” or “Jehovah God.” The following verse is an example of the “Lord Jehovah” type.

9). Judges 16:28

And Samson called unto the LORD [Jehovah], and said, O Lord [Adonai] GOD [Jehovah], remember me, I pray thee, and strengthen me, I pray thee, only this once, O God [elohim], that I may be at once avenged of the Philistines for my two eyes.

This scripture is also interesting because, if Elohim and Jehovah aren’t the same person, Samson is clearly praying to both. However, this verse makes perfect sense when we consider *elohim* to be a generic term meaning *god*.

At this point it should be obvious that the term *elohim* is not a title exclusively reserved for a being distinct from Jehovah. It was used frequently to refer to him, as well as other, false gods. Therefore, does it make sense to use this title to refer to God the Father (assuming he is distinct from Jehovah)? At best, Mormons are simply speaking Hebrew when they refer to him as *Elohim*, because this word plainly means *God*. Thus, it does not appear accurate to treat the word *elohim* as a personal name for any being.

This raises the additional question of whether the *O.T.* ever really refers to more than one (true) god. My studies have led me to conclude that it does not. In fact, the *O.T.* contains scriptures specifically denying that any other gods besides Jehovah exist:

10). Isaiah 43:10:

Ye are my witnesses, saith the LORD [Jehovah], and my servant whom I have chosen: that ye may know and believe me, and understand that I am he: before me there was no God [El] formed, neither shall there be after me.

11). Isaiah 44:6

Thus saith the LORD [Jehovah] the King of Israel, and his redeemer the LORD [Jehovah] of hosts; I am the first, and I am the last; and beside me there is no God [elohim].

According to (10), there was no God before Jehovah. There is some semantic leeway here, but I interpret this verse to mean that no (true) gods existed before Jehovah, nor would any be created after him. This is problematic if God the Father is considered to have existed before Jehovah (Christ).

Additionally, as (11) states, there is *no* God besides Jehovah. Or, using the Hebrew word, there is no *elohim* besides Jehovah. If there is no *elohim* other than Jehovah, why does the Mormon Church refer to someone other than Jehovah as *Elohim*? In my opinion, it is because the doctrine is flawed, and at odds with Judaism, which has always been a monotheistic religion.

What should be even more interesting for Mormons is that Joseph Smith did not seem to think Jehovah and Elohim were different people. He used a phrase that could easily be a direct quote from *Genesis*: “Jehovah, the Eloheim”.^d Few people in the church

^d Joseph Smith, *History of the Church*, Volume V, 94.

would use this phrasing today, since they consider Jehovah and Elohim to be different persons.

Thus, neither Joseph Smith nor the Jewish scriptures support the idea of a God named “Elohim” that is different than Jehovah. It is interesting to note that “Elohim” being the name of God the Father is not an official LDS Church doctrine. As far as I can tell, its teaching was instigated by James Talmage, likely in response to criticisms of the Adam-God Doctrine, where he referred to the two words as “name-titles.”

However, even in an early version of the Mormon Temple Ceremony, Eloheim and Jehovah were presented as separate individuals. It is an essentially agreed-upon teaching, but it was never accepted by a unanimous vote of the Church. As late as 1842, Joseph Smith demonstrated that he did not view the “name-titles” as separable. In fact, his use was more in harmony with the Jewish scriptures than current LDS teachings.

To my knowledge, no prophet has received a revelation in which he was taught this doctrine. I am sure it is never explicitly taught in the “standard works,” and the Jewish scriptures appear to refute the argument altogether. Therefore, even as a Mormon, I think I would be justified in rejecting this belief completely, were it not for the Temple Ceremony. Regardless, Mormons should be aware that, while the words *elohim* and *Jehovah* have authentic Hebrew origin, nothing in the *O.T.* usage supports the LDS belief that they are two names for different gods.

2) Does the plurality of the word “elohim” mean that multiple gods were involved in creation?

1). Teachings of the Prophet Joseph Smith (p. 371)

An unlearned boy must give you a little Hebrew. *Berosheit baurau Eloheim ait aushamayeen vehau aurait*, rendered by King James' translators, "In the beginning God created the heaven and the earth." I want to analyze the word *Berosheit*. *Rosh*, the head; *Sheit*, a grammatical termination, The *Baith* was not originally put there when the inspired man wrote it, but it has been since added by an old Jew. *Baurau* signifies to bring forth; Eloheim is from the word *Eloi*, God, in the singular number; and by adding the word *heim*, it renders it Gods. It read first, "In the beginning the head of the Gods brought forth the Gods," or, as others have translated it, "The head of the Gods called the Gods together." I want to show a little learning as well as other fools.

2). Teachings of the Prophet Joseph Smith (p. 372) (June 16, 1844)

"In the very beginning the *Bible* shows there is a plurality of Gods beyond the power of refutation. ... The word *Eloheim* ought to be in the plural all the way through—Gods."

Its use in the previous section shows that the plurality of the word, “elohim” does not necessarily indicate more than one entity. Additionally, most scholars (including LDS ones) agree that the word indicates a plurality of excellence, not of persons. Finally, the LDS position is obviously that “elohim” does not refer to more than one person, since they feel that Elohim is God the Father, and the father of Jehovah (see LDS Bible Dictionary, Temple Ceremony, etc.). Therefore, using this as an argument that multiple gods exist is unfounded, especially for Mormons.

However, Joseph Smith used this exact reasoning to determine that there were many gods. The quote above shows that he believed “elohim” should be replaced with “Gods” all the way through the *Bible* (2). Certainly, he did not think that “elohim” was the name of God the Father. If he did, why would he have used it as a proof of the plurality of gods, and said that it should be changed throughout the *Bible*?

In studying Joseph’s Hebrew translation, I will use the Hebrew words exactly as he gave them (1). Here is a simple translation of Genesis 1:1 as Joseph wrote it: *Berosheit*=“in the beginning,” *Eloheim*=“God(s),” *baurau*=“created”, *aushamayeen*=“heavens,” and *aurait*=“earth.” It is easy to see why the King James scholars gave their translation as, “In the beginning God created the heaven and the earth.”

When Joseph did this translation, he was studying Hebrew.^e Joseph said that the first word (*Berosheit*) should be broken into three parts: *Baith*, *rosh*, and *sheit* (he says *sheit* is simply a grammatical termination, but this does not seem to be accurate). He translated *rosh* as *head* (of the Gods), and claimed that the prefix *Baith* was not there

^e Joseph Smith, *History of the Church*: Volume II, 318.

when the inspired author wrote it, but “added by an old Jew.” His translation of *rosh* to mean *head* is accurate (it can mean *head*, *top*, *beginning* or *chief*, among other things). It should be clear, however, that he threw away two parts of the original (*Baith* and *sheit*) by dismissing them as spurious, with no good explanation.

Using his translation of *rosh* to mean *head*, Joseph rewrote the verse, “In the beginning, the head of the Gods brought forth the Gods.” It is hard to miss the irony here. Joseph threw away the prefix *Baith* so that *Berosheit* could mean *head*, giving him the desired translation “head of the Gods.” Then, he *kept* the phrase “in the beginning,” which is the exact translation of the word *Berosheit*. Joseph Smith first denounced the person who added the *Baith* prefix, and then proceeded to use the translation of that word in his “correct” translation, in addition to having translated *rosh* two times, once for *beginning*, and once for *head*. Finally, the “old Jew” must also have removed the phrase, “brought forth the Gods” because nothing in the Hebrew could have been translated that way. Joseph obviously was translating *baurau* to mean “bring forth,” but where is the second reference to “the Gods”? It does not exist—the word *Eloheim* only occurs once in the Hebrew.

Overall, Joseph’s knowledge of Hebrew was unimpressive (certainly, he was not qualified to make conclusions about mistranslation). In this same discourse, he claimed that *Eloheim* was the plural of *Eloi*. Scholars are unsure whether *elohim* is the plural of *eloha* (Hebrew) or *el* (also Hebrew), but I am not aware of any that believe it to be the plural of *Eloi*, which is not even a Hebrew word (it shows up in Mark 15:34, and may be from the Aramaic, *Elohi*).

Joseph claimed that the plurality of Gods could be proven from this verse. But, he slaughtered the verse with misinterpretations, added words, interpreted the same word to mean two different things (at once), and had to place the blame on “an old Jew” to even make his argument (which would fail anyway). Finally, he even seemed ignorant of the fact that the word *baurau* is a Hebrew verb conjugated in the singular. The very verse that he thought would prove his case actually disproves it, especially when one considers that the plural *Elohim* is no proof of duality of persons.

In this same discourse, Joseph said, “A little learning is a dangerous thing.”^f Although he must have been referring to others, Joseph Smith would have been pressed to find a more accurate statement regarding these very teachings.

Ironically, even if Joseph Smith’s argument were sound, it would disprove a major (albeit unofficial) doctrine of the LDS Church—namely, that Elohim refers to God the Father, and is his personal title/name. The only solid position a member of the church can take is that Joseph Smith was simply speculating, and that he was very far from the truth. As I showed previously, Joseph did not necessarily consider Jehovah and Eloheim to be different beings, so he probably would not have viewed it as a contradiction.

^f Joseph Smith, *History of the Church*: Volume VI, 475.

3) Was Joseph Smith’s “proof” of the plurality of Gods consistent with his inspired translation of the *Bible* (namely *Moses*) and/or *The Book of Abraham*?

Joseph’s proof of the plurality of gods, as I have shown in the previous section, was built around what he considered a mistranslation of the original Hebrew. Ironically, his translation contained far more misinterpretations than the translation given by the *KJV* scholars. However, since Joseph gave two independent translations of the same verse (both in books now included in the *Pearl of Great Price*), it should be enlightening to see how his translation from 1844 corresponded to these two texts. Here are the relevant verses from these books:

1). **Moses 2:1**

(June–October 1830)

AND it came to pass that the Lord spake unto Moses, saying: Behold, I reveal unto you concerning this heaven, and this earth; write the words which I speak. I am the Beginning and the End, the Almighty God; by mine Only Begotten I created these things; yea, *in the beginning I created the heaven, and the earth* upon which thou standest. [italics added]
[although the Joseph Smith Translation *might* be unfinished, *Moses* was canonized—this should be correct]

2). **Abraham 4:1**

(1842)

AND then the Lord said: Let us go down. And they went down *at the beginning*, and they, that is the Gods, organized and *formed the heavens and the earth*. [italics added]

The italicized section from *Moses* (1) shows that the same “old Jew” apparently corrupted Joseph Smith’s “inspired” version of the Bible. The entire phrase in italics is very nearly an exact copy of the first verse of Genesis. The phrase, “in the beginning” is also present, but the word *in* comes from the prefix *Be*, which Joseph threw away (remember, it was the work of an “old Jew”). In fact, if Joseph’s Hebrew translation of this section is correct, this sentence should never appear; it was corrupted, according to him. Because it does, it should be obvious that this translation was inconsistent with the translation from 1844.

In *Moses*, the word *created* is used. But, in the Hebrew, Joseph Smith translated the word *baurau* to mean, “bring forth.” His proof of plurality of Gods leaves him with no word to translate as “created.” Again, his translation is defeated by his own arguments (however fallacious they may be).

However, if we assume that Joseph was only speculating, as I suggested earlier, there is no contradiction. In this case, we would also have to throw out the *King Follet Discourse* (a famous discourse given by Smith at the funeral of a friend), because Joseph makes the exact same argument there for plurality of Gods (in very nearly the same words). Even then, another of Joseph’s works would invalidate this argument. One of Joseph’s “translations,” which also included the idea of many Gods, has now been

canonized by the Church—it is known as the *Book of Abraham* (now included in the *Pearl of Great Price*).

The *Book of Abraham* was never finished. Joseph spent years working on his Egyptian alphabet and translating the book. Today, his Egyptian alphabet is considered worthless, and completely void of any similarity to what is known of Egyptian writings. Additionally, Egyptian scholars have since translated the papyri he claimed to translate. Not only were they simply common funerary papyri, they were from the wrong time period, had nothing to do with Smith's translation, and made no mention of Abraham!^g

Even the text of *The Book of Abraham* seems defective. The phrase “at the beginning” (no different from “in the beginning”) again appears. If this phrase is correct, why did Joseph Smith later condemn it as being a spurious addition by an “old Jew”? Of course, this record does not purport to be a retranslation of the account of Genesis. In any case, the phrase, “in the beginning” or its equivalent is present in both of his accounts of the Creation. I consider it obvious that Joseph simply reworded the Genesis account here to include multiple Gods. Even the phrase, “they, that is, the Gods” (2) seems less like a literal translation than an overemphasis of the plurality of Gods. This will be more obvious when I examine the text of the Creation story in detail.

Joseph Smith's conclusion to his argument based on the original Hebrew word “*elohim*” was that it should be translated “*Gods*.” Since almost all references to “*God*” are actually a translation of the word “*elohim*,” this would mark a significant change in the *Old Testament*. It actually makes little sense, because there are hundreds of scriptures in the *Old Testament* that promote monotheism.

The biggest irony of all is that Smith's “inspired” version of the *Bible* (as the *JST* is commonly called) did not mention anything about plurality of Gods. Apparently, Joseph Smith's understanding of Hebrew was greater than the power of revelation, for it allowed him to recognize problems in the text that he failed to correct while retranslating *Genesis*.

Joseph Smith did teach that many Gods were involved in the Creation. He included it in a book of questionable origin (*Abraham*) and he tried (unsuccessfully) to prove it with his limited knowledge of Hebrew. But, when writing *Moses*, a book that God revealed to him over 10 years earlier, he made no mention of it. It should be apparent that the massive difference in the two books points to some kind of change. In fact, the change may have occurred while he was translating *Abraham*, because the first three chapters (before the Creation account) refer to God in the singular. Is it possible that Smith's study of Hebrew convinced him to make the change?

There are two possibilities, in my mind. Either God chose to deliberately withhold the truth from Joseph Smith while he was translating *Moses*, or Joseph invented both stories, and both reflected his current beliefs at the time they were written. Considering the fact that both *Moses* and *Abraham* were canonized, neither position is a very strong one.

^g Charles M. Larson, *By his Own Hand Upon Papyrus*

4). Does the Creation account in Abraham 4-5 appear to be a new translation?

What follows is a brief comparison between the Creation accounts from *Genesis* (*KJV*) and *Abraham* (which Joseph claimed was an independent translation from a different source). I selected verses that contain some of the biggest differences in the two accounts. I have underlined the differences between the *Genesis* and *Abraham* versions:

1). Genesis 1:3-4

And God said, Let there be light: and there was light.
And God saw the light, that it was good: and God divided the light from the darkness.

2). Abraham 4:3-4

And they (the Gods) said: Let there be light; and there was light.
And they (the Gods) comprehended the light, for it was bright; and they divided the light, or caused it to be divided, from the darkness.

3). Genesis 1:27-28

So God created man in his own image, in the image of God created he him; male and female created he them.
And God blessed them, and God said unto them, Be fruitful, and multiply, and replenish the earth, and subdue it: and have dominion over the fish of the sea, and over the fowl of the air, and over every living thing that moveth upon the earth.

4). Abraham 4:27-28

So the Gods went down to organize man in their own image, in the image of the Gods to form they him, male and female to form they them.
And the Gods said: We will bless them. And the Gods said: We will cause them to be fruitful and multiply, and replenish the earth, and subdue it, and to have dominion over the fish of the sea, and over the fowl of the air, and over every living thing that moveth upon the earth.

5). Genesis 1:19

And the evening and the morning were the fourth day.

6). Abraham 4:19

And it came to pass that it was from evening until morning that it was night; and it came to pass that it was from morning until evening that it was day; and it was the fourth time.

[I won't bother comparing these two versions. This "translation" is the same for the 3rd, 4th, 5th, and 6th day. The 1st and 2nd days have slight variations on it.]

7). Genesis 2:17

But of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, thou shalt not eat of it: for in the day that thou eatest thereof thou shalt surely die.

8). Abraham 5:13

But of the tree of knowledge of good and evil, thou shalt not eat of it; for in the time that thou eatest thereof, thou shalt surely die. Now I, Abraham, saw that it was after the Lord's time, which was after the time of Kolob; for as yet the Gods had not appointed unto Adam his reckoning.

The excerpts I quoted above are not intended to give the whole picture. I have done a comprehensive comparison of the two Creation accounts, and these are the most significant differences. When the two accounts are placed side by side, it is easy to see that about half of the material is identical. Many differences are trivial, but there are some significant ones. The replacement of every occurrence of "God" by "the Gods" (as well as verb and pronoun use to agree with this plural subject) is an important one. It is also interesting to note that very little of the *Genesis* account is missing from the *Abraham* account. Therefore, it appears that *Abraham* is simply *Genesis* with more words inserted, and a few words replaced.

This alone would not imply to me that Joseph Smith (or someone else) simply took *Genesis* and inserted new texts. Even the fact that a large portion of *Abraham* has the same wording as the *King James Version* might not mean anything. Smith could have purposely used the phrasing familiar to him and others to translate the papyri into English. So, let us take a look at what the insertions were.

Smith replaced every occurrence of the word "God" with "the Gods." Many other changes represent nothing more than grammatical changes required to make this plausible, or dialogue amongst "the Gods" (see 3,4). This is not at all surprising, since he had become a polytheist (in the sense that he believed in more than one God) by this time. In fact, this is *exactly* what he recommended doing based on his translation of the word *elohim*. So, it is entirely possible (and likely), that this change did not come by revelation, but through Smith's knowledge of Hebrew.

Another pervasive change was that Smith referred to the “days” of Creation as “times” (see 5,6). This, of course, is not at all unique to him. The Hebrew word *yowm* translated in the *KJV* as *day* can be translated as *day*, *time*, or *year*. In fact, many translations of the *Bible* use *period* or other equivalent words. Again, Smith could have easily included this because he was studying Hebrew at the time, and the possibility would have been obvious.

In addition to changing the word *day* to *time*, Smith changed verses like Genesis 1:19 even more significantly (5,6). The new words seem totally void of importance. Only the last five words of Abraham 4:19 are necessary (“it was the fourth time”). However, Smith added several words to the beginning. In addition to using the phrase “and it came to pass,” (this will sound familiar to *Book of Mormon* readers) all this text teaches us is that “from morning until evening” is day and that from “evening until morning” is night (something even the illiterate know). So, why did the writer feel it necessary to include this lesson five times? My guess is that Smith was trying to include the original words *evening*, *morning* and *day*, and this is what resulted. Whatever the reason, the wording makes little sense, because Smith’s “days” are now “times.” Why does every transition between “times” reference the morning and evening (obvious references to “days”), unless the “times” were in fact “days”? In my opinion, Smith’s attempt to tweak the text of Genesis to his own satisfaction has resulted in some very awkward wording here.

There are many other textual insertions that I did not include. Quite a few of them change the meaning of the scripture significantly. Many of them seem designed to explain the original scripture in question (not surprisingly, they are clarifications that might very well be responses to criticisms of the *Bible* or doctrinal disputes). For example, using the word “time” instead of “day” avoids the apparent difficulty that the world was created in only seven days. Another example is Abraham 5:13.

The longest, single insertion in the *Book of Abraham* is the last sentence in Abraham 5:13 (see 8). It is easy to see that it breaks the flow of the text. Suddenly, the author (supposedly Abraham) feels the need to explain something to the reader. Until this time (in the Creation account), the author has been completely silent. In a style reminiscent of *The Book of Mormon*, he decides to make a comment on the history he is writing. It clearly implies that the rest of the words are not his own, as if he were recompiling another history.

The comment the author makes is interesting. He explains that the “time” that God referred to was “after the time of Kolob.” He also explains that God had not yet “appointed unto Adam his reckoning.” In other words, when God told Adam he would die in that “time,” he did not mean that he would die in one earth day. This solves an apparent contradiction that many critics of the *Bible* have pointed out—namely, that Adam *did* eat the fruit, but didn’t die for hundreds of years. Why would Abraham have felt the need to point this out? He probably wouldn’t, but someone in Joseph Smith’s time certainly might have. In any case, it is unnecessary to make this point, if the word “time” is understood to mean a period, much longer than a day.

How can one explain the word “Kolob,” used in the same verse? To understand this, we should look at the first reference to this word in Abraham:

9). Abraham 3:13,16

And he said unto me: This is Shinehah, which is the sun. And he said unto me: **Kokob, which is star**. And he said unto me: Olea, which is the moon. And he said unto me: **Kokaubeam, which signifies stars**, or all the great lights, which were in the firmament of heaven.

...

If two things exist, and there be one above the other, there shall be greater things above them; therefore **Kolob is the greatest of all the Kokaubeam** that thou hast seen, because it is nearest unto me.

These verses contain the words *Kolob*, *Kokob*, and *Kokaubeam*. The similarity between these words is unquestionable. It turns out that the second two are Hebrew words. The Hebrew word *kowkab* (or *kokob*), meaning *star*, is found in Genesis 1:16:

10). Genesis 1:16

And God made two great lights; the greater light to rule the day, and the lesser light to rule the night: he made the stars [kokob] also.

Following the rules of plurals in Hebrew, the plural of *kokob* would be something like *kokabeim*. This is linguistically equivalent to the word *Kokaubeam* found in Abraham 1:16, when you consider that vowels were not written in the Hebrew text. The marked similarity between *Kolob* and *kokob* now becomes meaningful. With the exception of one consonant (the *l* in *Kolob*), the two strange words in Abraham 1:16 are Hebrew. Not only are they Hebrew words, they are found in the first book of Genesis, which Joseph Smith had been studying in Hebrew.^h It is now obvious that even this strange addition to the Genesis account is easily attributable to Smith, and his study of the *Bible* and Hebrew.

This short lesson can be found in Abraham 3:13 (9). Abraham was taught that *kokob* meant *star*, and that *kokaubeam* meant *stars*—the “Lord” taught Abraham some basic Hebrew. Since Joseph Smith was studying Hebrew at this time,ⁱ it is not unlikely that he would have known this basic vocabulary. However, what is this elementary Hebrew lesson doing in an Egyptian document? Although this is an interesting question, it is unimportant in the comparison before us.^j I include it to show that the longest addition to *Genesis* contains only one non-English word, and it happens to be *very* similar to a Hebrew word that can be found in *Genesis*. It is difficult to think that *kokob*, a Hebrew word meaning *star*, and *kolob*, Joseph’s name for a particular star, are not related. This is especially obvious when the text reveals that the author knew the meaning of the word *kokob*, as well as its plural *kokaubeam* (9).

After comparing the Creation account from *Abraham* with the original first two chapters of *Genesis*, it is obvious that it differs significantly. However, could all of the

^h Faulring, *American Prophet’s Record*, 139. Joseph took classes from a Mr. Seixas, which partially consisted of translating Hebrew from the books of Genesis, Exodus, and Psalms

ⁱ Joseph Smith, *History of the Church*: Volume II, 318.

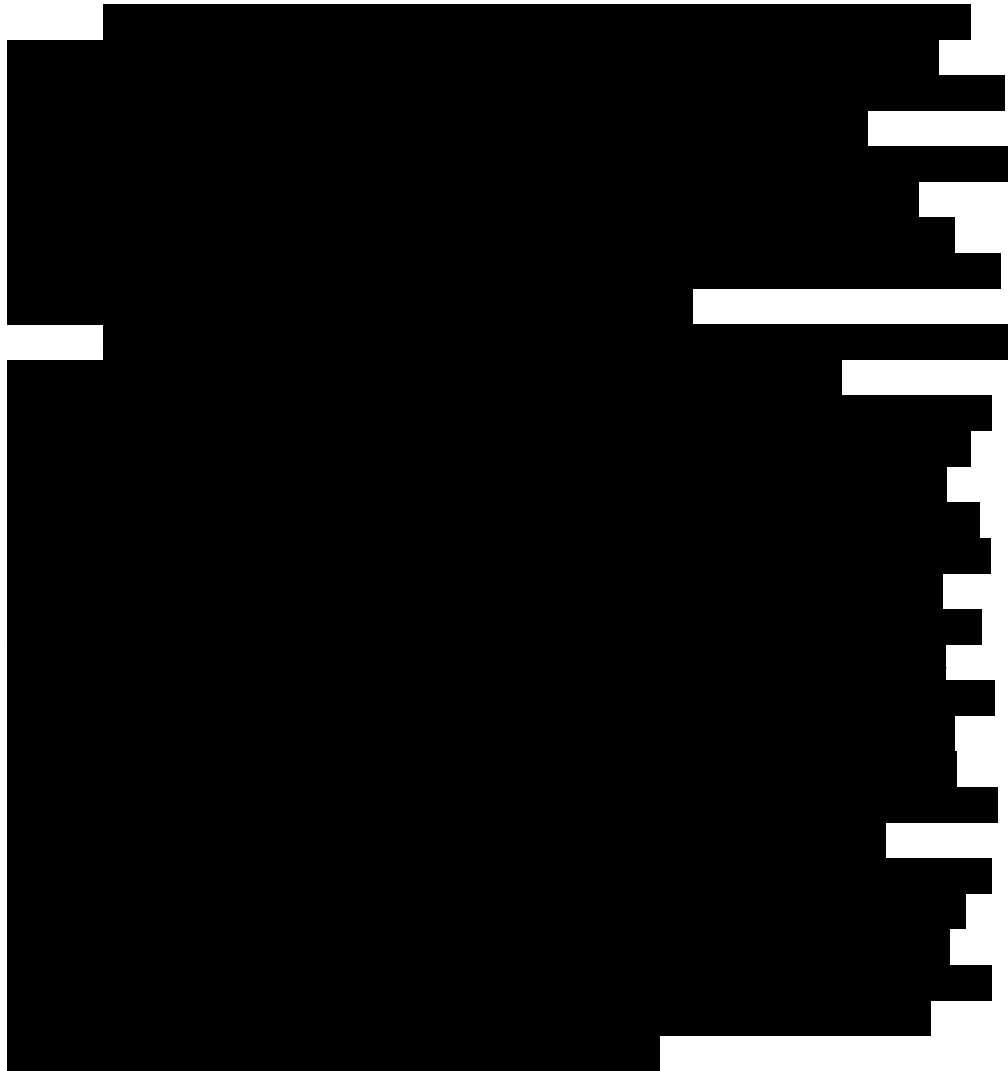
^j Faulring, *American Prophet’s Record*, 127. The answer is most likely that Mr. Seixas, who here is shown taking a keen interest in the Egyptian papyri, either taught this lesson to J.S. in lecture, or helped author part of the “translation.”

new text be the result of Smith's own knowledge? Some of the additions were nothing but responses to questions that Smith or others may have had about the story of Creation from *Genesis*. Others are easily attributable to Smith's knowledge of Hebrew. In fact, one change (the change from "God" to "the Gods") is probably the result of his (poor) understanding of the Hebrew word *elohim*. Finally, other sections are awkwardly worded, probably as the result of Smith trying to use as much of the original text as possible while making his own points.

Could Smith have written the Creation account from the *Book of Abraham*, using only his knowledge, including his study of Hebrew and *Genesis*? I believe the evidence shows he could have. The text demonstrates a simple rewording of most of the verses to suggest that multiple Gods, instead of only one, were involved in the Creation of the Earth. The additional text concerning "Kolob" not only seems out of place, it appears to be strongly linked to a rudimentary Hebrew lesson that was given earlier in the text itself. Considering all this, and the obvious use of *KJV* wording, the *Book of Abraham* hardly seems an impressive effort.

Chapter 2

The Joseph Smith Translation



^a Mark E. Peterson, *As Translated Correctly*, 4

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^b Robert J. Matthews, “Joseph Smith’s Inspired Translation of the Bible,” *Ensign*, Dec. 1972, 61, also see Bruce R. McConkie, *Mormon Doctrine*, 383

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^c Dallin H. Oaks, “The Witness: Martin Harris,” *Ensign*, May 1999, 35

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^d Millet, *The Joseph Smith Translation: The Restoration of Plain and Precious Things*, 43-45
^e Matthews, *Ensign* January 1983

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^f Tanner, *Changing World*, 390

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^gGordon B. Hinkley, *First Presidency Message: The Father, Son, and Holy Ghost*, Liahona, Mar. 1998, 3

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^h This has reference to a *Book of Mormon* prophecy that foresaw the removal of “plain and precious” things from the *Bible*. See *3 Nephi*, Chapter 13. This gives scriptural precedent (for Mormons) for Joseph’s correcting the altered *Bible*.

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ⁱ Bruce R. McConkie, *Mormon Doctrine*, 384

^j Gordon B. Hinckley, “The Father, Son, and Holy Ghost,” *Liahona*, Mar. 1998, 3

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^k McConkie, *Mormon Doctrine*, 420

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Chapter 3

Controversial Doctrines

The Mormon Church has been accused of many horrible things. Many of these things are probably false. However, others seem to have merit. Because there are people who spread lies about the Church and other organizations, it is difficult to know which accusations are true. Certain accusations of the Church are specific and unchanging, however. I believe the reason for this is that they are founded in truth. In my study of Church publications, I found evidence that many of these things are true. The purpose of this chapter is to cover five topics: (1) whether it is consistent to ignore teachings from the *Journal of Discourses* simply because the Church never chose to canonize it; (2) the teaching and practicing of so-called “blood atonement;” (3) the teaching of the so-called *Adam-God doctrine*; (4) the teaching, practice, methods, and denial of polygamy; (5) the teaching of doctrines that justified racism.

1) Should the Journal of Discourses be considered when judging the consistencies of Church teachings?

Latter Day Saints believe in an open, flexible, and expanding canon.^a This means that the teachings and books the leaders consider inspired can be added to the canon at any time. They also believe that, because their prophets speak with God, they can reveal new truths at any time. Joseph Smith exercised this option to an extreme degree, adding several hundred pages of scripture (in three books) to the canon, and modifying the *KJV* as he saw fit. All of the canonized books were written during the lifetime of Joseph Smith (who died in 1844), and some of his works (like the *JST*) remain unfinished to this day, and are not yet part of the canon.

The policy of the open canon raises some interesting questions, however. If Smith did not finish the *JST*, why hasn't one of the many "prophets, seers, and revelators" of the Church finished the job? Why has the canon expanded so little in the last 150 years? Finally, why was Joseph the only one capable of translating new scriptures? These questions have merit because one of the Church's core doctrines—the ability to reveal new scripture and teachings—seems to have stagnated since the time of Joseph Smith.

The leaders since Joseph Smith have done nothing but rely on his legacy. They have not significantly added to the LDS canon—only Joseph Smith, who translated enormous amounts of material, truly added "canonized" books. It is important to claim the canon is open, for without this *The Book of Mormon* and other canonized books could not be considered works of scripture. One might ask, however: why do they no longer practice this doctrine—why do they no longer add to the canon?

Although no prophet since Joseph Smith has translated any new works of scripture, or written a significant amount that has been added to the "standard works," there is plenty of evidence that at one time, all of the words of the prophets were part of the "expanding canon." For example, Joseph Smith taught that he was like the mouthpiece of God:

1). Teachings of the Prophet Joseph Smith (p. 369)

God made Aaron to be the mouthpiece for the children of Israel, and He will make me be a god to you in His stead, and the elders to be mouth for me; and if you don't like it, you must lump it.

The claim Joseph made here was that he spoke for God. Therefore, his teachings and writings should definitely be considered scripture (for Mormons). Similarly, Brigham Young made it clear that he considered all of his sermons scripture, when he said the following:

2). Journal of Discourses, Volume 13, p. 264

(Brigham Young, October 6, 1870)

I will make a statement here that has been brought against me as a crime, perhaps, or as a fault in my life. Not here, I do not allude to anything of the kind in this place, but in the councils of the nations—that Brigham Young has said "when he sends forth his discourses to the world they may call them Scripture." I say now, when they are copied and approved by me they are as good Scripture as is couched in this Bible....

^a Robert Millet, "What We Believe" in *1997-1998 Speeches*.

Young was defending to a statement he had made earlier the same year, in which he stated, "I have never yet preached a sermon and sent it out to the children of men, that they may not call Scripture."^b These statements will become important later, when we consider some of the controversial things that Young taught. However, it is interesting to note that Mormons often dismiss writings of their "prophets" because they are not in the "Standard Works." In fairness, the average Mormon probably considers the words of the prophets as binding as anything in the scriptures, for this has been taught by the Church for years:

3). Gospel Principles, Chapter 10, "Studying the Scriptures"

In addition to these four books of scripture, the inspired words of our living prophets become scripture to us. Their words come to us through conferences, Church publications, and instructions to local priesthood leaders. "We believe all that God has revealed, all that he does now reveal, and we believe that he will yet reveal many great and important things pertaining to the Kingdom of God" (Articles of Faith 1:9).

However, when challenged on certain, controversial teachings, I have heard Mormons say, "Well, that isn't in the Standard Works." In other words, because a particular teaching was never canonized, it can safely be ignored (especially when it is convenient to do so). McConkie had an interesting point to make about the words of the prophets:

4). Bruce R. McConkie

(p. 764, *Mormon Doctrine*, 2000. Bookcraft)

Even the writings, teachings, and opinions of the prophets of God are acceptable only to the extent they are in harmony with what God has revealed and what is recorded in the standard works.

If McConkie's analysis is correct, the teachings of the prophet must be checked against the scriptures before they can be accepted. What are the "Standard Works" if not the writings and teachings of prophets, including Joseph Smith? Why are today's prophets held to a different standard—namely, that their words are "acceptable only if they are in harmony with what God has revealed"? Some may want to note that even McConkie's statement on the matter is not authoritative, because he was not "the prophet." In fact, perhaps we should disregard it altogether, because it is not in "harmony with what God has revealed" to Joseph Smith (1) and Brigham Young (2).

I feel that the reason LDS apologists and others are so keen to disregard things like the *Journal of Discourses* and other similar documents is because they directly contradict what the Church teaches today. The problem is that the dismissal of these teachings is evidence that the "prophets" are not considered inspired.

If all of the sermons recorded in the *Journal of Discourses* are not valid, then the modern prophets are *nothing* compared to the prophets of old. If their teachings are only valid when they are in agreement with the "Standard Works," then what good is a prophet? After all, *any* person's teaching should be considered valid when it agrees with the scriptures! Again, this puts the importance and reliability of modern-day prophets seriously into question. Joseph Fielding Smith made remarks to the same effect when he said, "My words, and the teachings of any other member of the Church, high or low, if they do not square with the revelations, we

^b *Journal of Discourses*, Volume 13, 95

need not accept them.”^c Once again, since nothing in the “revelations” teaches this, how can one be sure if this statement can be trusted?

Thus far, there seems to be a large inconsistency. Joseph Smith taught that he was a mouthpiece of God, and Brigham Young taught that his sermons were as good as scripture. Ezra Taft Benson (a recent prophet of the Church) taught similar ideas, including (but not limited to) the fact that a prophet is more vital than the “Standard Works,” the prophet does not need to say, “Thus Saith the Lord” to give scripture (any counsel he gives is scripture), and that the prophet “speaks for the Lord in everything.”^d Church manuals teach that the words of the prophets are scripture. In contrast, we have those like McConkie and Joseph Fielding Smith who claimed the words of the prophets could be ignored if they contradicted the scriptures. On the one hand, Mormons are taught that prophets’ words are equivalent, and even superior to scripture. On the other hand, they are taught to ignore those teachings if they disagree with the “Standard Works.”

I find it unreasonable to disregard any of the teachings of the “prophets,” considering Joseph Smith and Brigham Young’s affirmations that they spoke for God, and Benson’s teaching that the counsel of the prophet *is* scripture. McConkie and Joseph Fielding Smith’s points, while appearing to be contradictory, are essentially nullified by teachings like the following:

5). Marion G. Romney

(General Conference, Oct 1960)

I remember years ago when I was a bishop I had President Grant talk to our ward. After the meeting, I drove him home. At that time there was a great deal of criticism against the President of the Church because of a front-page editorial some of you may remember. We talked about it. When we got to his home I got out of the car and went up on the porch with him. Standing by me, he put his arm over my shoulder and said: "My boy, you always keep your eye on the President of the Church, and if he ever tells you to do anything, and it is wrong, and you do it, the Lord will bless you for it." Then with a twinkle in his eye, he said, "But you don't need to worry. The Lord will never let his mouthpiece lead the people astray."

Basically, this teaches that it is impossible for the prophet to teach something incorrect—the Lord would not allow it. According to this, there is no basis for rejecting the words of the prophets, for they should *never* disagree with the “Standard Works.” This means that Mormons should be following everything in the *Journal of Discourses*, because it contains the words of the prophets. It should not be surprising, then, that the *Journal of Discourses* states the following:

^cJoseph Fielding Smith, *Doctrines of Salvation*, Volume 3, 203

^d Ezra Taft Benson, “Fourteen Fundamentals in Following the Prophet,” *Classic Speeches*, 17-27

6). Journal of Discourses, Volume 8, Preface

THE *Journal of Discourses* deservedly ranks as one of the standard works of the Church, and every rightminded Saint will certainly welcome with joy every Number as it comes forth from the press as an additional reflector of "the light that shines from Zion's hill." [italics added]

We rejoice, therefore, in being able to present to the Saints another completed Volume—the Eighth of the series; and, in so doing, we sincerely commend the varied and important instructions it contains to their earnest consideration.

Today, the *JD* is not considered one of the "Standard Works." It seems that at one point in time it was. Based on this, and the other statements that show that the words of the prophets are at least equal to scripture, it seems contradictory, then, to state that the teachings in the *Journal of Discourses* are uninspired, or that they should not be considered when testing the validity of the church's claims to prophecy, revelation and the fullness of the truth.

If indeed the *Journal of Discourses* is not part of the open canon, exactly what has been added since the days of Joseph Smith? What did Brigham Young contribute, if anything? He was President and prophet of the Church for 33 years. The Church recently published a manual, *Teachings of Presidents of the Church: Brigham Young*, containing teachings largely from the *Journal of Discourses*. Are these teachings not considered correct? If they are, then their source should also be considered doctrinal.

It is interesting to note, however, that this manual contains quotations that have been censored of controversial content. Here is one such example:

7). Journal of Discourses, Volume 9, p. 256 (Brigham Young, March 16, 1862)

Let the husband and father learn to bend his will to the will of his God, and then instruct his *wives* and children...[italics added]

8). Brigham Young - Teachings of Presidents of the Church (p. 165)

Let the husband and father learn to bend his will to the will of his God, and then instruct his [*wife*] and children...[italics added]

This subtle change makes Brigham's reference to polygamy disappear. Among other things, the manual seems intent on portraying Brigham Young as a monogamist. Notably missing are the doctrines of Blood Atonement, Polygamy, and Adam-God theory. To me, this demonstrates that the Church has good reason to avoid some of the content of the *JD*.

Although many members consider what "the brethren" have said to be equal to scripture, and there are statements such as the one from *Gospel Principles* that support this, many apologists have taken an interesting position: nothing, except the four "Standard Works" is ever to be considered official. This convenient way of approaching the issue allows them to avoid the problems evident in resolving the statements of so-called "prophets" with current teachings and scriptures. It causes one to wonder about the value of listening to the "prophets."

It is, however, evidence that the idea of "ever-expanding" canon is dying out. In fact, prophets of the Mormon Church rarely teach anything new, or astounding (as Joseph, Brigham, and others surely did). Prophecy is essentially non-existent. Rarely is anything said about

these men's calling of seer. Most importantly, nothing written in the last 100 years has been added to the canon. So much for the "open, flexible and expanding canon"!

If what the "Brethren" (a phrase commonly used to refer to the apostles and prophets of the Church) say is only their opinion, and not considered revelation unless they are "the prophet" and it is canonized, it presents an interesting dilemma for Mormons. What else can their sermons therefore be known as, but "the philosophies of men, mingled with scripture"? This phrase comes from the Mormon temple ceremony, and refers to the teachings of non-LDS faiths (those lacking true revelation). Since Brigham Young and others often quoted or referred to scriptures to prove their points, a statement that these were "only opinions" affirms that this label applies as well to them as anyone.

Thus, Mormons have the option of ignoring the teachings in the *JD* if they feel uncomfortable with them, or if those teachings tend to disagree with current theology. However, such a choice seriously undermines the importance of prophets, and essentially denies the "expanding canon" idea that Mormons need so desperately to admit the "Standard Works" into their canon. If, indeed, it can be said that the teachings of the *JD* are not relevant, Mormons must also ignore the words of their living prophets (their link with Heaven). Because this is unreasonable, and does violence to the belief system they hold, I find no alternative but that they resolve their belief system with the teachings contained within the *JD*, or admit their belief system is flawed and inconsistent.

I consider it unacceptable to admit only the teachings that seem unproblematic, and ignore the rest of the sermons as if they were mere opinions. I believe that any person who chooses this route does so simply because it is the only way he/she can find to continue believing the Mormon Church is true.

2) Was the doctrine of “blood atonement” taught by the Church, and was it practiced?

The teaching of *blood atonement* was one that suggested the blood of Christ was not sufficient to remit some sins, requiring individuals to shed their own blood (be killed) in order to be forgiven. The teaching is quite pervasive in the *JD*, and can even be found in a few other places. It is often necessary to include lengthy excerpts in order to see the full meaning of some of these statements. I have included several quotations to demonstrate both the seriousness of the teaching, and its frequency.

1). Doctrines of Salvation, Volume 1, p. 135

(Joseph Fielding Smith)

Joseph Smith taught that there were certain sins so grievous that man may commit, that they will place the transgressors beyond the power of the atonement of Christ. If these offenses are committed, then the blood of Christ will not cleanse them from their sins even though they repent. Therefore, their only hope is to have their own blood shed to atone, as far as possible, in their behalf. This is scriptural doctrine, and is taught in all the standard works of the church. [italics original]

2). Journal of Discourses, Volume 4, p. 53

(Brigham Young, September 21, 1856)

There are sins that men commit for which they cannot receive forgiveness in this world, or in that which is to come, and if they had their eyes open to see their true condition, *they would be perfectly willing to have their blood spilt upon the ground*, that the smoke thereof might ascend to heaven as an offering for their sins; and the smoking incense would *atone for their sins*, whereas, if such is not the case, they will stick to them and remain upon them in the spirit world.

I know, when you hear my brethren telling about *cutting people off from the earth*, that you consider it is strong doctrine; *but it is to save them*, not to destroy them.

Of all the children of Israel that started to pass through the wilderness, none inherited the land which had been promised, except Caleb and Joshua, and what was the reason? It was because of their rebellion and wickedness; and because the Lord had promised Abraham that he would save his seed.

They had to travel to and fro to every point to the compass, and were wasted away, because God was determined to save their spirits. But they could not enter into His rest in the flesh, because of their transgressions, consequently He destroyed them in the wilderness.

I do know that there are sins committed, of such a nature that if the people did understand the doctrine of salvation, they would tremble because of their situation. And furthermore, I know that *there are transgressors, who, if they knew themselves, and the only condition upon which they can obtain forgiveness, would beg of their brethren to shed their blood*, that the smoke thereof might ascend to God as an offering to appease the wrath that is kindled against them, and that the law might have its course. I will say further; *I have had men come to me and offer their lives to atone for their sins.*

It is true that the blood of the Son of God was shed for sins through the fall and those committed by men, yet men can commit sins which it can never remit. As it was in ancient days, so it is in our day; and though the principles are taught publicly from this stand, still the people do not understand them; yet the law is precisely the same. There are sins that can be atoned for by an offering upon an altar, as in ancient days; and *there are sins that the blood of a lamb, of a calf, or of turtle doves, cannot remit, but they must be atoned for by the blood of the man.*

That is the reason why men talk to you as they do from this stand; they understand the doctrine and throw out a few words about it. You have been taught that doctrine, but you do not understand it. [italics added]

3). Journal of Discourses, Vol 3, p. 247

(Brigham Young, March 16, 1856)

You say, "That man ought to die for transgressing the law of God." Let me suppose a case. *Suppose you found your brother in bed with your wife, and put a javelin through both of them, you would be justified*, and they would atone for their sins, and be received into the kingdom of God. *I would at once do so* in such a case; and under such circumstances, *I have no wife whom I love so well that I would not put a javelin through her heart*, and I would do it with clean hands. But you who trifle with your covenants, be careful lest in judging you will be judged. [italics added]

4). Journal of Discourses, Volume 7, p. 19

(Heber C. Kimball, July 16, 1854)

It is believed in the world that our females are all common women. Well, in one sense they are common—that is, they are like all other women, I suppose; but they are not unclean, *for we wipe all unclean ones from our midst: we not only wipe them from our streets, but we wipe them out of existence*. And if the world want to practise uncleanness, and bring their prostitutes here, if they do not repent and forsake such sins, we will wipe the evil out. We will not have them in this valley, unless they repent; for, so help me God, *while I live, I will lend my hand to wipe such persons out; and I know this people will*. [italics added]

5). Journal of Discourses, Volume 4, p. 219 - p. 220

(Brigham Young, February 8, 1857)

You are aware that when brother Cummings came to the point of loving our neighbours as ourselves, he could say yes or no as the case might be, that is true. But I want to connect it with the doctrine you read in the *Bible*. When will we love our neighbour as ourselves? In the first place, Jesus said that no man hateth his own flesh. It is admitted by all that every person loves himself. Now if we do rightly love ourselves, we want to be saved and continue to exist, we want to go into the kingdom where we can enjoy eternity and see no more sorrow nor death. This is the desire of every person who believes in God. Now take a person in this congregation who has knowledge with regard to being saved in the kingdom of our God and our Father, and being exalted, one who knows and understands the principles of eternal life, and sees the beauty and excellency of the eternities before him compared with the vain and foolish things of the world, and suppose that he is overtaken in a gross fault, that he has committed a sin that he knows will deprive him of that exaltation which he desires, and that he cannot attain to it without the shedding of his blood, and also knows that by having his blood shed he will atone for that sin, and be saved and exalted with the Gods, is there a man of woman in this house but what would say, "*shed my blood that I may be saved and exalted with the Gods?*"

All mankind love themselves, and *let these principles be known by an individual, and he would be glad to have his blood shed*. That would be loving themselves, even unto an eternal exaltation. Will you love your brothers or sisters likewise, when they have committed a sin that cannot be atoned for without the shedding of their blood? *Will you love that man or woman well enough to shed their blood? That is what Jesus Christ meant*. He never told a man or woman to love their enemies in their wickedness, never. He never intended any such thing; his language is left as it is for those to read who have the Spirit to discern between truth and error; it was so left for those who can discern the things of God. Jesus Christ never meant that we should love a wicked man in his wickedness.

Now take the wicked, and I can refer to where the Lord had to slay every soul of the Israelites that went out of Egypt, except Caleb and Joshua. He slew them by the hands of their enemies, by the plague, and by the sword, why? Because He loved them, and promised Abraham that He would save them. And He loved Abraham because he was a friend to his God, and would stick to Him in the hour of darkness, hence He promised Abraham that He would save his seed. And He could save them upon no other principle, for they had forfeited their right to the land of Canaan by transgressing the law of God, and they could not have atoned for the sin if they had lived. But if they were slain, the Lord could bring them up in the resurrection, and give them the land of Canaan, and He could not do it on any other principle.

I could refer you to plenty of instances where men, have been righteously slain, in order to atone for their sins. I have seen scores and hundreds of people for whom there would have been a chance (in the last resurrection there will be) if their lives had been taken and their blood spilled on the ground as a smoking incense to the Almighty, but who are now angels to the devil, until our elder brother Jesus Christ raises them up—conquers death, hell, and the grave. I have known a great many men who have left this Church for whom there is no chance whatever for exaltation, but if their blood had been spilled, it would have been better for them. The wickedness and ignorance of the nations forbid this principle's being in full force, but the time will come when the law of God will be in full force.

This is loving our neighbour as ourselves; if he needs help, help him; and if he wants salvation and it is necessary to spill his blood on the earth in order that he may be saved, spill it. Any of you who understand the principles of eternity, if you have sinned a sin requiring the shedding of blood, except the sin unto death, would not be satisfied nor rest until your blood should be spilled, that you might gain that salvation you desire. That is the way to love mankind.
[italics added]

6). Journal of Discourses, Volume 4, p. 49
(Jedediah M. Grant, September 21, 1856)

I say, that there are men and women that I would advise to go to the President immediately, and ask him to appoint a committee to attend to their case; and then let a place be selected, and *let that committee shed their blood.*

We have those amongst us that are full of all manner of abominations, those who need to have their blood shed, for water will not do, their sins are of too deep a dye.

You may think that I am not teaching you *Bible* doctrine, but what says the apostle Paul? I would ask how many covenant breakers there are in this city and in this kingdom. I believe that there are a great many; *and if they are covenant breakers we need a place designated, where we can shed their blood.* [italics added]

7). Confessions of John D. Lee, p. 284
(1877)

Brigham Young knew very well that I was not a man who would willingly take life, and therefore I was not ordered to do his bloody work. I never took part in any killing that was desired or ordered by the Church, except the part I took in the Mountain Meadows Massacre. I was well known by all the members of the Church as one that stood high in the confidence of Brigham Young, and that I was close-mouthed and reliable. By this means I was usually informed of the facts in every case where violence was, used in the section of country where I resided. I knew of many men being killed in Nauvoo by the Danites. It was then the rule that all the enemies of Joseph Smith should be killed, and *I know of many a man who was quietly put out of the way by the orders of Joseph and his Apostles* while the Church was there.

It has always been a well understood doctrine of the Church that it was right and praiseworthy to kill every person who spoke evil of the Prophet. This doctrine had been strictly lived up to in Utah, until the Gentiles arrived in such great numbers that it became unsafe to follow the practice, but the doctrine is still believed, and *no year passes without one or more of those who have spoken evil of Brigham Young being killed*, in a secret manner. [italics added]

8). Confessions of John D. Lee, p. 283
(1877)

...Klingensmith went to Anderson and notified him that the orders were that he must die by having his throat cut, so that the running of his blood would atone for his sins. Anderson, being a firm believer in the doctrines and teachings of the Mormon Church, made no objections, but asked for half a day to prepare for death. His request was granted. His wife was ordered to prepare a suit of clean clothing, in which to have her husband buried, and was informed that he was to be killed for his sins, she being directed to tell those who should enquire after her husband that he had gone to California....

No move of that kind was made in Cedar City, unless it was done by order of the "Council" or of the "High Council." I was at once informed of Anderson's death.... *The killing of Anderson was then considered a religious duty and a just act.* It was justified by all the people, for they were bound by the same covenants, and the least word of objection to thus treating the man who had broken his covenant would have brought the same fate upon the person who was so foolish as to raise his voice against any act committed by order of the Church authorities. [italics added]

The preceding quotes should be sufficient to show that the Church leaders believed in, and taught blood atonement. Joseph Fielding Smith's statement was that the doctrine was taught in "all the standard works of the church," leaving little room for doubt that the Church believed in this doctrine (1). In fairness to his statements on the matter, I should note that he later unequivocally denied that the Church ever practiced "blood atonement." One might wonder why not, since it was apparently an official doctrine. However, as I will demonstrate, it seems likely that the Church *did* act out the practice.

At the time of all the statements from Brigham Young, he was the President and Prophet of the LDS Church. In the first excerpt from Brigham Young (2), he claimed that anyone who understood the doctrine of blood atonement would be willing to be killed, if it were necessary for salvation. He then spoke of "cutting people off from the face of the earth" to save them. He claimed that men would "beg of their brethren to shed their blood." Finally, he said that men had already come to him, offering "their lives to atone for sins." Brigham Young did

not say how he responded to their request. However, we know that Brigham Young believed in the practice of blood atonement. Therefore, it is not at all improbable that he complied with these men's requests, and killed them (or had them killed) to help them atone for their sins.

The second quote from Brigham Young (3) concerns adultery. He stated, without reserve, that it was permissible for a man to kill his wife, and a man with whom she committed adultery (in this case, a brother-in-law). He further affirmed that he himself would follow this practice, if he found himself in that circumstance. Most amazingly, he taught that the murdered wife and lover would be received into the kingdom of God. Not only did he justify the killing of one's wife, he explained that, in doing so, she would be saved. Considering the large number of woman that Brigham Young married, one might wonder if he ever had to put this into practice. However, regardless of whether he did, he admitted that he was willing to. He did imply that those who did not keep their covenants did not have the right to follow this practice. Apparently, it was fine to kill one's adulterous wife as long as one was keeping his covenants.

Heber C. Kimball's statement (4) is quite important. Since this is a historical statement, it is irrelevant whether Kimball was "inspired" to make it or not. In this quote, he explained why the Mormon women were chaste. The reason, apparently, was that the unchaste ones were murdered! He stated, "we not only wipe them from our streets, but we wipe them out of existence." He went on to state his willingness to take part in such action, and affirmed that the people would also be willing to do so. This sounds like an application of blood atonement, but it might just be the mark of religious intolerance. Either way, it certainly paints a gruesome picture for early Mormonism.

The next quote, by Brigham Young (5) is very interesting. I included the full section, so the reader will be able to understand the context (which makes it even more interesting). Young was teaching about "loving one's neighbor as oneself." He explained that those who loved themselves would do everything possible to be saved. Therefore, one who loved another would do the same to save that person (so far, this sounds fairly harmless). But, he then applied the teaching to blood atonement.

He claimed that those who loved themselves would submit to blood atonement (if required for salvation), meaning that to love one's "neighbor as thyself" would entail shedding his/her blood (when required for salvation). Brigham asked, "Will you love that man or woman well enough to shed their blood?" Finally, he confirmed that this was a direct application of Jesus' teaching to "love thy neighbor as thyself." Again, if his listeners believed his words, there is no reason to assume that they did not put them into practice when they believed the situation merited it.

According to the next quote (6), Jedediah M. Grant believed the practice, and advocated it. He claimed that there were those who needed to immediately apply the practice. His suggestions clearly imply that the practice had taken place before. He explained that they needed to talk with the president, set up a committee, and find a place to have their blood shed. Did Grant appear to be joking about this? He appeared familiar with the practice, and supportive of it, in addition to advising those eligible to take part in it. At this time, Jedediah was an apostle and second counselor to Brigham Young.

In the first excerpt from John D. Lee (7), he made a serious accusation against Brigham Young and the Mormon people. He claimed that it was a well-known doctrine that killing the detractors of the prophets was "praiseworthy." He also said that many who spoke out against Brigham Young and Joseph Smith were secretly killed. Again, this may have been the doctrine of blood atonement in practice, or simply what was required to protect the reputation of the prophet. Either way, it is horrible, if true.

In the second excerpt from John Lee (8), he told of a man who was ordered to atone for his sins through death. He stated that Anderson, the man in question, made no objections, because he believed in the practice. Considering the statements from Brigham Young on the matter, this is not difficult to believe. Lee taught that the killing was considered a “religious duty and a just act,” which it would have been, according to Young’s teachings. However, we can also see that it was done in secret, and that the wife was instructed to lie about it to others. If this was the procedure, it may be impossible to know how many more times this kind of thing happened in secret.

Some have said, including Joseph Fielding Smith, that blood atonement was never practiced by the Mormon Church. Again, this makes no sense. Brigham Young clearly felt that the practice was applicable immediately. He taught that he had no wife that he would not be willing to kill, if necessary for her salvation. He taught others to do the same, and also taught that the practice was an extension of the teaching to “love thy neighbor as thyself.” Heber C. Kimball taught that immoral women were destroyed because of their sins. John D. Lee gave testimony about a case where blood atonement was explicitly practiced. Jedediah’s sermon confirmed Lee’s statement that a council had to be called to follow the practice.

It is possible that blood atonement was never practiced. However, there is no reason to believe that it was not. Bruce McConkie taught that blood atonement would not be practiced fully, until “civil and ecclesiastical laws are administered in the same hands.”^e When the Mormons migrated to Utah and began their own government, they had the opportunity to effect this very situation. In addition, a simple reading of the above excerpts shows that they were not just referring to capital punishment; the members would have felt justified practicing blood atonement in their own homes, without the government condoning it.

In truth, any Mormon who listened to and believed Brigham Young would have felt justified in committing acts that would be illegal and atrocious today (and then!). It is probable that some (if not most) of those people were fanatical enough to act on his teachings, feeling that their actions were warranted. Even if there *were* no documented cases of the practice, it would still be reasonable to assume that it took place. Just as we assume that the Law of Moses was taken literally, and that offenders were sometimes put to death, we should assume that Mormon teachings to the same effect were also taken literally. Additionally, since there is testimony and reference to its practice, it seems quite likely that the doctrine of blood atonement was both taught and carried out.

In reference to blood atonement, McConkie said, “By taking one sentence on one page and another from a succeeding page and even by taking a part of a sentence on one page and a part of another found several pages away—all wholly torn from context—dishonest persons have attempted to make it appear that Brigham Young and others taught things just the opposite of what they really believed and taught.”^f McConkie gave absolutely no proof or examples to support his claim; he simply allowed the reader to assume that the accusation of blood atonement were formed by piecing half-sentences together in an attempt to put words in Brigham Young’s mouth.

My quotations are all full paragraphs, and often many paragraphs in succession. Not one of them consists of two, separate statements linked together. Sadly, they still demonstrate that Brigham Young was willing to kill transgressors, and that he expected others to do so. The reader can judge whether the extensive quotations have been “torn from context.” It is not necessary to resort to what McConkie has claimed is necessary. I respectfully submit that

^e McConkie, *Mormon Doctrine*, 93

^f McConkie, *Mormon Doctrine*, 92

McConkie was the one misrepresenting the facts, by offering *no evidence* of the conspiracy he referred to. I do not doubt that his intentions were good; he was probably trying to help the Church save face. Without taking sentences out of context, the evidence still shows that the teachings of the early Church leaders are more similar to the Law of Moses than simple capital punishment.

For those who find it hard to believe in blood atonement, or that it was actually practiced, the following quotes are intended to show the character of Brigham Young and others. Their rough nature, and willingness to kill others may have been a product of their time and circumstances. Some of their feelings are even understandable. The point, however, is that it that it would not be difficult to imagine these same people killing in the name of religion. I will not bother commenting on the following quotes—they speak for themselves.

9). Journal of Discourses, Volume 1, p. 83

(Brigham Young, March 27th, 1853)

I will tell you a dream that I had last night. I dreamed that I was in the midst of a people who were dressed in rags and tatters, they had turbans upon their heads, and these were also hanging in tatters. The rags were of many colors, and, when the people moved, they were all in motion. Their object in the appeared to be, to attract attention. Said they to me, "We are Mormons, brother Brigham." "No, you are not," I replied. "But we have been," said they, and they began to jump, and caper about, and dance, and their rags of many colors were all in motion, to attract the attention of the people. I said, "You are no Saints, you are a disgrace to them." Said they, "We have been Mormons." By and bye, along came some mobocrats, and they greeted them with, "How do you do, sir, I am happy to see you." They kept on that way for an hour. I felt ashamed of them, for they were in my eyes a disgrace to "Mormonism." Then I saw two ruffians, whom I knew to be mobbers and murderers, and they crept into a bed, where one of my wives and children were. I said, "You that call yourselves brethren, tell me, is this the fashion among you?" They said, "O, they are good men, they are gentlemen." With that, I took my large bowie knife, that I used to wear as a bosom pin in Nauvoo, and cut one of their throats from ear to ear, saying, "Go to hell across lots." The other one said, "You dare not serve me so." I instantly sprang at him, seized him by the hair of the head, and, bringing him down, cut his throat, and sent him after his comrade; then told them both, if they would behave themselves they should yet live, but if they did not, I would unjoint their necks. At this I awoke.

I say, rather than that apostates should flourish here, I will unsheath my bowie knife, and conquer or die. [Great commotion in the congregation, and a simultaneous burst of feeling, assenting to the declaration.] *Now, you nasty apostates, clear out, or judgment will be put on the line, and righteousness to the plummet.* [Voices, generally, "go it, go it."] If you say it is right, raise your hands. [All hands up.] Let us call upon the Lord to assist us in this, and every good work. [italics added]

10). Journal of Discourses, Volume 5, p. 165

(Heber C. Kimball, August 30, 1857)

Now, I will tell you, I have about a hundred shots on hand all the time,—three or four fifteen-shooters, and three or four revolvers, right in the room where I sleep; and the Devil does not like to sleep there, for he is afraid they will go off half-cocked.

If you will lay a bowie knife or a loaded revolver under your pillow every night, you will not have many unpleasant dreams, nor be troubled with the nightmare; for there is nothing that the Devil is so much afraid of as a weapon of death.

11). Journal of Discourses, Volume 1, p. 105

(Brigham Young, May 8, 1853)

Take up the history of the first settling of America, and you cannot read of a colony ever being settled in the midst of savages, without having trouble, and suffering more from them than this people have in Utah. What is the reason? It is because those people did not know how to take care of themselves. We can scarcely read of one colony founded among the aborigines in the first settling of this country, wherein the tomahawk of wild Indians did not drink the blood of whole families. Here there have been no such deeds committed; because *when we first entered Utah, we were prepared to meet all the Indians in these mountains, and kill every soul of them if we had been obliged so to do.* This preparation secured to us peace. [italics added]

12). Journal of Discourses, Volume 1, p. 108 – p. 109

(Brigham Young, May 8, 1853)

If you want to know what to do with a thief that you may find stealing, I say *kill him on the spot*, and never suffer him to commit another iniquity. That is what I expect I shall do, though never, in the days of my life, have I hurt a man with the palm of my hand. I never have hurt any person any other way except with this unruly member, my tongue. Notwithstanding this, if I caught a man stealing on my premises I should be very apt to send him straight home, and that is what I wish every man to do, to put a stop to that abominable practice in the midst of this people. [italics added]

13). Journal of Discourses, Volume 1, p. 167

(Brigham Young, July 31, 1853)

...And when you go into the harvest field, carry a good butcher knife in your belt, that if an Indian should come upon you, supposing you to be unarmed, you would be sure to kill him.

14). Journal of Discourses, Volume 3, p. 234 – p. 235

(Jedediah M. Grant, March 2, 1856)

I want the Gentiles to understand that we know all about their whoredoms and other abominations here. *If we have not invariably killed such corrupt scoundrels, those who will seek to corrupt and pollute our community, I swear to you that we mean to,* and to accomplish more in a few hours, towards clearing the atmosphere, than all your grand and traverse juries can in a year. [italics added]

15). Journal of Discourses, Volume 6, p. 126
(Heber C. Kimball, December 13, 1857)

Jesus said to his disciples, "Ye are the salt of the earth; and if the salt loses its saving principle, it is then good for nothing but to be cast out." Instead of reading it just as it is, almost all of you read it just as it is not. Jesus meant to say, "If you have lost the saving principles, you Twelve Apostles, and you that believe in my servants the Twelve, you shall be like unto the salt that has lost its saving principles: it is henceforth good for nothing but to be cast out and trodden under foot of men." Judas lost that saving principle, and they took him and killed him. It is said in the *Bible* that his bowels gushed out; but *they actually kicked him until his bowels came out.*

"I will suffer my bowels to be taken out before I will forfeit the covenant I have made with Him and my brethren." Do you understand me? Judas was like salt that had lost its saving principles—good for nothing but to be cast out and trodden under foot of men. It is just so with you men and women, if you do not honour your callings and cultivate the principles you have received. *It is so with you, ye Elders of Israel, when you forfeit your covenants.*

Brethren and sisters, as the Lord liveth, and as we live and exist in these mountains, let me tell you the world is ripe, and there are no saving principles within them, with a very few exceptions; and they will gather out, and the rest of mankind are ready for destruction, for they will have no salt to save them. I know the day is right at hand when men will forfeit their Priesthood and turn against us and against the covenants they have made, and they will be destroyed as Judas was.

Ye Elders, Apostles, Seventies, High Priests, Bishops, Priests, Teachers, and Deacons, never be guilty of that which you have been guilty of once before. *If it were not for your ignorance, you would have been cut off from the earth;* but, in consequence of your ignorance, I feel as though God would forgive you, if you will never do it again. *But if you do it again, your time for repentance is past, and you do not again get pardon.* [italics added]

16). Journal of Discourses, Volume 14, p. 58
(George Q. Cannon, August 15, 1869)

We are solving the problem that is before the world to-day, over which they are pretending to rack their brains. I mean the "Social Problem." We close the door on one side, and say that *whoredoms, seductions and adulteries must not be committed* amongst us, and *we say to those who are determined to carry on such things we will kill you;* at the same time we open the door in the other direction and make plural marriage honorable. What is the result? Why, a healthy, pure and virtuous community, a community which, in these respects, has no equal on the earth. [italics added]

3) Did the Church teach that Adam was God the Father?

A controversial doctrine taught by Brigham Young was that Adam was the same person as God the Father. I feel that he believed this, but it was only recorded a few times. There is some evidence that Joseph Smith may have started the teachings. The following quotes should be sufficient to show that Young taught and believed this strange doctrine. As the first quote indicates, the LDS church equates Michael with Adam. This idea (at least in the Church) originated with Joseph Smith, and is still doctrine today.[§] Therefore, any reference to Michael should be considered equivalent to a reference to Adam.

1). **Journal of Discourses, Volume 1, p. 50 - p. 51** (Brigham Young, April 9, 1852)

Now hear it, O inhabitants of the earth, Jew and Gentile, Saint and sinner! When our father Adam came into the garden of Eden, he came into it with a celestial body, and brought Eve, one of his wives, with him. He helped to make and organize this world. He is MICHAEL, the Archangel, the ANCIENT OF DAYS! about whom holy men have written and spoken—HE is our FATHER and our GOD, and the only God with whom WE have to do. Every man upon the earth, professing Christians or non-professing, must hear it, and will know it sooner or later. They came here, organized the raw material, and arranged in their order the herbs of the field, the trees, the apple, the peach, the plum, the pear, and every other fruit that is desirable and good for man; the seed was brought from another sphere, and planted in this earth. The thistle, and thorn, the brier, and the obnoxious weed did not appear until after the earth was cursed. When Adam and Eve had eaten of the forbidden fruit, their bodies became mortal from its effects, and therefore their offspring were mortal. When the Virgin Mary conceived the child Jesus, the Father had begotten him in his own likeness. He was not begotten by the Holy Ghost. And who is the Father? He is the first of the human family; and when he took a tabernacle, it was begotten by his Father in heaven, after the same manner as the tabernacles of Cain, Abel, and the rest of the sons and daughters of Adam and Eve; from the fruits of the earth, the first earthly tabernacles were originated by the Father, and so on in succession. I could tell you much more about this; but were I to tell you the whole truth, blasphemy would be nothing to it, in the estimation of the superstitious and over-righteous of mankind. However, I have told you the truth as far as I have gone. I have heard men preach upon the divinity of Christ, and exhaust all the wisdom they possessed. All Scripturalists, and approved theologians who were considered exemplary for piety and education, have undertaken to expound on this subject, in every age of the Christian era; and after they have done all, they are obliged to conclude by exclaiming "great is the mystery of godliness," and tell nothing. [capitals original]

It is true that the earth was organized by three distinct characters, namely, Eloheim, Yahovah, and Michael, these three forming a quorum, as in all heavenly bodies, and in organizing element, perfectly represented in the Deity, as Father, Son, and Holy Ghost.

[§] *Teachings of the Prophet Joseph Smith*, 38-39

2). Journal of Discourses, Volume 6, p. 237 - p. 238

(Joseph Smith, June 2, 1839)

The Priesthood is an everlasting principle, and existed with God from eternity, and will to eternity, without beginning of days or end of years. The keys have to be brought from heaven, whenever the Gospel is sent. When they are revealed from heaven, it is by Adam's authority. Daniel vii. speaks of the Ancient of Days. He means the oldest man—our Father Adam (Michael). He will call his children together and hold a council with them to prepare them for the coming of the Son of Man. He (Adam) is the Father of the human family, and presides over the spirits of all men; and all that have had the keys must stand before him in this grand council. This may take place before some of us leave this stage of action. The Son of Man stands before him, and there is given him glory and dominion. Adam delivers up his stewardship to Christ—that which was delivered to him as holding the keys of the universe, but retains his standing as head of the human family.

3). Journal of Discourses, Volume 6, p. 275

(Brigham Young, August 28, 1852)

This is a key for you. The faithful will become Gods, even the sons of God; but this does not overthrow the idea that we have a father. Adam is my father; (this I will explain to you at some future time;) but it does not prove that he is not my father, if I became a God: it does not prove that I have not a father.

4). Deseret Evening News, June 14, 1873

(Brigham Young)

“How much unbelief exists in the minds of the Latter-day Saints in regard to one particular doctrine which I revealed to them, and which God revealed to me—namely that Adam is our Father and God—I do not know, I do not inquire, I care nothing about it. Our Father Adam helped to make this earth, it was created expressly for him, and after it was made he and his companions came here. He brought one of his wives with him, and she was called Eve, because she was the first woman on the earth. Our Father Adam is the man who stands at the gate and holds the keys of everlasting life and salvation to all his children who have or who ever will come upon the earth.

...

[Adam said] ‘I once dwelt upon an earth something like this, in a mortal state.... I want my children that were born to me in the spirit world to come here and take tabernacles of flesh that their spirits may have a house, a tabernacle, or a dwelling place as mine has,’ and where is the mystery?”

The first quote (1), from Brigham Young, is probably the most frequently used to show that he believed Adam was God. He went so far as to say that Adam was “the only God with whom we have to do.” In other words, although he might have believed in multiple Gods, Adam was *his* and the Church’s God. This statement is so difficult to resolve with current Church doctrine that many leaders and apologists of the Church have suggested that it was misquoted^h (although Brigham would have had several years to correct it). In this same

^h Joseph Fielding Smith, *Doctrines of Salvation*, 96

discourse, he claimed that Jesus was conceived by “the first of the human family,” after the “same manner as Cain and Abel...” Considering the context, and the fact that Cain and Abel were two of Adam’s sons, it seems likely that “the first of the human family” referred to none other than Adam. In spite of this, Brigham Young’s wording was vague enough that it did not directly equate Adam with Elohim (God the Father). Some have made the argument that “the first of the human family” refers to the Father, not Adam.ⁱ In my opinion, this is still problematic, because in the same sermon Brigham had already taught that Adam was the *only* God that was relevant to the Latter Day Saints. In light of this, it seems unreasonable to think that his next reference to God (the Father) would refer to a different God than Adam.

At least two in the audience interpreted Brigham Young’s statements to mean that Adam was the father of Jesus Christ. In his journal, under the same date as the sermon, Hosea Stout wrote, “President B. Young taught that Adam was the father of Jesus and the Only God to us.”^j Within a week, Samuel Rogers similarly wrote, “[Brigham Young] said that Adam was the only God that we would have, and that Christ was not begotten of the Holy Ghost, but of Father Adam...” The opinion of these two individuals is important in establishing how Young’s statements were interpreted, although it does not prove his intent.

This same quote provides additional insights into Brigham Young’s beliefs. He claimed that Adam and Eve came into the world with celestial bodies (this contradicts both creation accounts authored by Joseph Smith: *Abraham* and *Moses*). Further, he stated that Adam and Eve were already married, and that Eve was only *one* of Adam’s wives, implying plural marriage. The significance of Adam being married to Eve *before* the Creation will be obvious later on.

Joseph Smith, in the second quote (2), explained that “our Father Adam” was the oldest man. He went on to say that he would “call his children together,” and hold a council. He taught that Adam “presides over all the spirits of men.” He claimed, “All who hold the keys must stand before him.” Since the meaning of “keys” in Mormonism means the rights to exercise the priesthood in certain ways, this includes all prophets, apostles, and priests. Even the Son of Man (Jesus Christ) was included in those that would stand before him. Finally, although he would deliver “up his stewardship to Christ,” Adam would “retain his standing as head of the human family.” Although Joseph nowhere explicitly stated that Adam was God, it seems that he considered him to be above Christ, and he referred to him as the “Father of the human family.” It is not clear whether Joseph agreed with Young’s later interpretation of Adam’s position, but it is possible that Young’s beliefs stemmed from Joseph’s statements like this one.

The next quote from Brigham Young (3) teaches that he believed Adam was his father. The point of his statements was to prove that the idea of eternal progression (becoming like God) was not a fallacy simply because humans have fathers. He pointed out that he had a father, and that if one day he became a God, he would still have a father. The difficulty arises because he claimed that his “father” was Adam. Certainly he didn’t mean his earthly father, so he must therefore have been referring to his spiritual father. Brigham Young apparently believed that his spiritual father was Adam. However, the First Presidency and Quorum of the Twelve Apostles taught that father of the “spirits of the human race” was Elohim.^k As Young stated in (1), Elohim and Michael (Adam) were distinct characters. I feel this must be viewed as

ⁱ Joseph Fielding Smith, *Answers to Gospel Questions*, Vol. 5, 123

^j *Diary of Hosea Stout*, Vol. 2, 435

^k *Improvement Era*, Aug. 1916, 934-42, reprinted in “The Father and the Son,” *Ensign*, Apr. 2002, 13

a contradiction in teaching, although Young still did not explicitly state that Adam was God the Father.

In February of 1854, Young made his point more directly. He posed the question, “Who did beget Jesus Christ?” and his answer was as follows: “His Father, and his father is our God, and the Father of our spirits and he is the framer of the body, the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ. Who is he? He is Father Adam; Michael; the Ancient of days.”¹ I see no way to interpret this except that Young considered Adam to be the father of our spirits and the father of Jesus Christ. In the Mormon context, these are roles that apply specifically to Elohim, or God the Father. Therefore, even if he did not equate Elohim and Adam, Brigham did teach that certain roles, which traditionally have belonged to Elohim, actually belonged to Adam. Most importantly, with these two roles belonging to Adam, the title “God the Father” seems to apply better to him than to Elohim. It also becomes apparent that a polemicist view that Adam was only “Our Father” in the sense of being the first human on the earth is wholly inaccurate.

In October of 1854, Young again spoke explicitly about the Adam-God doctrine. He spoke about Adam’s origin as a resurrected being from another earth. At one point during the sermon, he stated, “I tell you more, Adam is the father of our spirits.” At a later point, he claimed, “I tell you, when you see your father Adam in the heavens, you will see Adam; When you see your Mother that bear your spirit, you will see mother Eve...”^m Based on this sermon, I cannot escape the conclusion that Brigham Young considered Adam and Eve to be the spiritual parents of all humanity.

Brigham Young and Orson Pratt did not see eye to eye on the Adam-God doctrine. Pratt understood Young’s speeches to be teaching that Adam was the father of Christ and humanity’s spirits. In a debate on the subject with the Quorum of the Twelve, he stated the following:

I have heard Brigham say that Adam is the Father of our spirits and he came here with a resurrected body, to fall for his own children, and I said to him it leads to an endless number of falls which leads to sorrow and death; that is revolting to my feelings, even if it were sustained by revelation.

One [revelation] says that Adam was formed out of the earth, and the Lord put in his spirit, and another that he came with his body, flesh and bones, there are two contradictory revelations. (April 5, 1860, Miscellaneous Papers, Brigham Young Collection, LDS Archives as cited in *Dialogue*, Vol.15, No.1, 28)

Pratt and many others continued to disagree with President Young on this point of doctrine. The next year Young publicly referred to the dissenters in a derogatory way. He stated, “Some years ago, I advanced a doctrine with regard to Adam being our father and God, that will be a cause [curse?] to many Elders of Israel because of their folly. With regard to it they yet grovel in darkness and will.” He claimed that it was a glorious revelation, and complained that, if he had been the one to reveal baptism for the dead (an accepted doctrine that Joseph introduced), the dissenters would have ridiculed it as well. He finished by describing to those who disagreed as follows: “But they are ignorant and stupid like the dumb ass.”ⁿ

However, after this time, Brigham Young began to slow down and even partially abandon this controversial doctrine. In 1863, He even made two statements that seemed to

¹ Discourse, February 19, 1854, *Brigham Young Collection*, LDS Archives as cited in *Dialogue*, Vol.15, No.1, 18

^m Discourse, October 8, 1854, *Brigham Young Papers*, LDS Archives as cited in *Dialogue*, Vol.15, No.1, 20-22

ⁿ Discourse, October 8, 1861, manuscript entitled “A Few Words of Doctrine,” *Brigham Young Collection*, LDS Archives as cited in *Dialogue*, Vol.15, No.1, 29

contradict his previous ideas.^o Those statements have been used to refute the idea that he ever taught the Adam-God doctrine. Such arguments miss the point, however. The issue is not whether Young ever taught anything that contradicted Adam-God doctrine, but whether he ever taught the doctrine itself. If he contradicted himself (which I believe he did), it only suggests a lack of inspiration—it does not prove he did not believe Adam was God the Father. In fact, prior to these statements, Young had suggested that it was might have been better to keep the truth from the Church, since they were so poor at accepting it.^p Perhaps this explains why he began teaching ideas that were not in agreement with his earlier ones.

The final quote (4) is taken from the *Desert News* four years before Brigham Young's death, and shows that despite his statements in 1863, he continued to believe that Adam was the Father. In it, he was quoted as reaffirming his teaching that "God revealed" to him: "Adam is our Father and God." He again stated that Adam brought one of his wives with him to earth. Finally, he made it clear that he considered all humans to be spirit children of Adam: "I want my children that were born to me in the spirit world to come here." He showed that Adam became a God *before* coming to this earth, not after. He showed that Adam already had spirit children, and that they were the spirits of the people on this earth. Once again, this would mean that Adam is the *spiritual* father, making him God the Father (according to Mormon theology). Further, Brigham Young lamented that the Saints had trouble believing the "doctrine," which is not surprising considering the disagreement from Orson Pratt and others.

It is hardly possible to accepted Young's teachings in a sense that agrees with modern Mormon doctrine; the most that one can credibly claim is that Young did not believe Michael and Elohim were one and the same person. I find such a claim (while probable) hardly relevant to the issue—if Adam was the father of both Christ and the spirits of humanity, and the *only* God that pertains to the LDS, it matters little if there is another God who outranks him. Additionally, those Christians who are offended by the idea of Adam being "God" are probably offended most by the idea that Adam (the root of man's despair) is the father of Jesus Christ. I feel there can be little doubt that Brigham Young believed and taught that very thing, so the distinction between Elohim and Michael becomes unimportant.

While this doctrine might seem strange, blasphemous, and shocking to mainstream Christianity, it would not be the only such doctrine taught by the Mormon Church. By itself, it would mean little—it would just be another difference between mainstream Christianity and Mormonism. However, for at least 50 years, the Church has been denying the truth of this doctrine, and that Brigham Young (or anyone else) ever taught it.^q The evidence shows otherwise. Brigham Young would probably have been disappointed to see his "revealed" doctrine ignored, denied, and generally shunned by the Church. He seemed quite adamant that it be taught, and was disappointed in the Saints for not believing it during his own time. The Church's policy of complete denial is disappointing: it reveals a trend of dishonesty to improve credibility.

^o *Journal of Discourses*, Vol.10, 230-231 & Vol.13, 308-309

^p *Deseret News*, June 27, 1860, 129-30: "...I have revealed too much concerning God and his kingdom...If I had, like Paul, said--"But if any man be ignorant, let him be ignorant," perhaps it would have been better for the people."

^q Joseph Fielding Smith, *Doctrines of Salvation*, 105

4) Has the Church been consistent in its teachings on polygamy?

John Taylor, *Millennial Star*, Volume 15, p. 227

...the one-wife system not only degenerates the human family, both physically and intellectually, but it is entirely incompatible with philosophical notions of immortality; it is a lure to temptation, and has always proved a curse to a people.

Polygamy refers to the practice of taking more than one mate at a time. The practice of marrying multiple wives in the LDS Church began with Joseph Smith, who married several times (the exact number is unknown) while prophet. Many years later, the Church outlawed it after significant pressure from the United States government, and eventually began to excommunicate members who practiced it.

The subject of polygamy is a complicated one. Many people in the LDS Church have problems with the practice, and are happy that it is no longer practiced. Others believe it is a necessary part of salvation, as taught by leaders of the church, and that it will someday be restored. Bruce R. McConkie claimed that it was not necessary for salvation^r but he simply was not accurately stating the facts. For example, the following quote from Brigham Young demonstrates that it was once considered impossible to gain salvation without it:

1). *Journal of Discourses*, Volume 11, p. 269

Brigham Young, August 19, 1866

...*The only men who become Gods, even the Sons of God, are those who enter into polygamy.* Others attain unto a glory and may even be permitted to come into the presence of the Father and the Son; but they cannot reign as kings in glory, because they had blessings offered unto them, and they refused to accept them.

Because becoming a god is the ultimate reward for devout Mormons, not attaining this goal would be to fall short of full salvation. Orson Pratt made a statement to similar effect, although his wording was much stronger:

^r Bruce R. McConkie, *Mormon Doctrine*, 578

2). Journal of Discourses, Volume 17, p. 225 - p. 226
(Orson Pratt, October 7, 1874)

Now, after having said so much in relation to the reason why we practice polygamy, I want to say a few words *in regard to the revelation on polygamy*. God has told us Latter-day Saints that *we shall be condemned if we do not enter into that principle*; and yet I have heard now and then (I am very glad to say that only a few such instances have come under my notice,) a brother or a sister say, "I am a Latter-day Saints, but I do not believe in polygamy." Oh, what an absurd expression! what an absurd idea! A person might as well say, "I am a follower of the Lord Jesus Christ, but I do not believe in him." One is just as consistent as the other. Or a person might as well say, "I believe in Mormonism, and in the revelations given through Joseph Smith, but I am not a polygamist, and do not believe in polygamy." What an absurdity! If one portion of the doctrines of the Church is true, the whole of them are true. If the doctrine of polygamy, as revealed to the Latter-day Saints is not true, I would not give a fig for all your other revelations that came through Joseph Smith the Prophet;

Pratt made it very clear that salvation without polygamy was impossible. He also pointed out that it made no sense to believe in the Church without believing in polygamy. I am inclined to agree with him, because it was revealed by a prophet (Joseph Smith), and one cannot selectively believe his teachings if he is truly considered a prophet. Therefore, it should be clear that polygamy was considered a necessary component of salvation for Mormons, despite statements to the contrary.

My intention is not to determine why the Church finally eliminated polygamy, or whether the practice was ethical in the first place. The purpose of this section is to determine whether the prophet's revelations and statements on polygamy are consistent. If they are not, the credibility of these prophets is in question regarding everything they ever taught. In this first quote, Joseph Smith claimed something that was untrue:

3). History of the Church: Volume VI, p. 411
(Joseph Smith, Nauvoo, May 26, 1844.)

Be meek and lowly, upright and pure; render good for evil. If you bring on yourselves your own destruction, I will complain. It is not right for a man to bare down his neck to the oppressor always. Be humble and patient in all circumstances of life; we shall then triumph more gloriously. *What a thing it is for a man to be accused of committing adultery, and having seven wives, when I can only find one.*

I am the same man, and as innocent as I was fourteen years ago; and I can prove them all perjurers. I labored with these apostates myself until I was out of all manner of patience; and then I sent my brother Hyrum, whom they virtually kicked out of doors.
[italics added]

According to this, Joseph Smith could only "find one" wife in 1844. This was simply not true, for he had been engaging in plural marriage for several years. By 1843, he had at least 16 wives.^s Previously, in 1838, Joseph had publicly denied that polygamy was a doctrine of the Church, while admitting that it was a question frequently posed to him.^t Even then, he had

^s Newel & Avery, *Mormon Enigma*, 143

^t Joseph Smith, *Teachings of the Prophet Joseph Smith*, 119

already begun the practice of polygamy^u (which is not surprising, if he already felt the need to respond to the accusation). Earlier in 1844, his brother Hyrum had publicly lied as well:

4). Times and Seasons: March 15, 1844

(Hyrum Smith, Nauvoo)

To the brethren of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints, living on China Creek, in Hancock County, greeting:-Whereas brother Richard Hewitt has called on me to-day, to know my views concerning some doctrines that are preached in your place, and states to me that some of your elders say, *that a man having a certain priesthood, may have as many wives as he pleases, and that doctrine is taught here: I say unto you that that man teaches false doctrine, for there is no such doctrine taught here.* And any man that is found teaching privately or publicly any such doctrine, is culpable, and will stand a chance to be brought before the High Council, and loose his license and membership also: therefore he had better beware what he is about. [italics added]

Hyrum knew about Joseph's involvement in polygamy. Additionally, he married his first two plural wives in 1843.^v Both Joseph's and Hyrum's statements were made after the recording of section 132 of the *Doctrine and Covenants*, which commanded polygamy. Joseph dictated the revelation, and Hyrum later read it to Emma.^w Therefore, Hyrum must have simply been lying to protect the Church when he denied such a belief.

The following is a section that was removed from the *Doctrine and Covenants*, which specifically denied the doctrine of polygamy:

5). Doctrine and Covenants, 1835 Edition

(Section CI, Verse 4, removed in 1876)

All legal contracts of marriage made before a person is baptized into this church, should be held sacred and fulfilled. *Inasmuch as this church of Christ has been reproached with the crime of fornication, and polygamy: we declare that we believe, that one man should have one wife; and one woman, but one husband,* except in case of death, when either is at liberty to marry again. It is not right to persuade a woman to be baptized contrary to the will of her husband, neither is it lawful to influence her to leave her husband. All children are bound by law to obey their parents; and to influence them to embrace any religious faith, or be baptized, or leave their parents without their consent, is unlawful and unjust. We believe that all person who exercise control over their fellow beings, and prevent them from embracing the truth, will have to answer for that sin. [italics added]

The mere existence of such a denial should be enough to convince anyone that the Church was involved in polygamy as early as 1835. This section was quoted several times by Church leaders as evidence that they did not believe in polygamy,^x but was clearly a lie. In 1876, when section 132 (detailing the law of polygamy) was made part of the D&C, Section 101 was removed. The reason is obvious: the two clearly contradicted each other. Most interestingly, the Church did not ratify this version of the D&C until 1880, meaning that it was technically not "Church doctrine" until then (that is, unless you accept that everything said by the prophets is doctrine).

^u Newel & Avery, *Mormon Enigma*, 66

^v Newel & Avery, *Mormon Enigma*, 142

^w Diary of William Clayton, "12 July 1843, Wednesday"

^x E.M. Webb, *Times and Seasons*, Volume 6, 894 (also in a tract published by John Taylor in England in 1850)

I have seen evidence of other Church leaders who married more than one wife claiming that they had not.^y However, there is no reason to further examine the subject, because the following excerpt from Dallin H. Oaks clearly admits the problems:

6). Gospel Teachings About Lying

(Dallin H. Oaks in *Clark Memorandum*, Spring 1994, 14)

As far as concerns our own church and culture, the *most common allegations of lying for the Lord swirl around the initiation, practice, and discontinuance of polygamy.*

It is clear from the record of history that Joseph Smith introduced the doctrine and practice of polygamy to a select few in the 1830s and 1840s, but it was not announced publicly by the church until the revelation was read aloud at a Church conference in Salt Lake City in 1852. It is also clear that during the federal prosecutions of the 1880s, numerous Church leaders and faithful members were pursued, arrested, prosecuted, and jailed for violations of various laws forbidding polygamy or cohabitation. Some wives were even sent to prison for refusing to testify against their husbands, my grandfather's oldest sister being one of them.

It is also clear that polygamy did not end suddenly with the 1890 Manifesto. Polygamous relationships sealed before that revelation was announced continued for a generation. The performance of polygamous marriages also continued for a time outside the United States, where the application of the Manifesto was uncertain for a season. It appears that polygamous marriages also continued for about a decade in some other areas among leaders and members who took license for the ambiguities and pressures created by this high-level collision between resented laws and revered doctrines.

The whole experience with polygamy was a fertile field for deception. It is not difficult for historians to quote LDS leaders and members in statements justifying, denying, or deploring deception in furtherance of this religious practice.

First, he admitted that Joseph and others practiced polygamy in the 1830's and later. Second, he acknowledged that the Church continued to practice polygamy a decade after the 1890 manifesto in which Wilford Woodruff stated, "We are not teaching polygamy or plural marriage, nor permitting any person to enter into its practice...."^z Third, he affirmed that it is easy for historians to show that Church leaders advocated deception regarding polygamy. I think the quotes I have chosen show that he is absolutely correct in his analysis.

In this same discourse, Oaks went on to pity the people who had to choose between jail time and lying about polygamy, as well as condemning any and all lying. He explained that there is *no such thing* as "lying for the Lord." In other words, there was no excuse for those who lied, whether it was to protect themselves or others.

The real problem for me is the nature of the statements made by Joseph & Hyrum Smith (as well as others, whom I have not bothered to quote). They specifically denied practicing polygamy (Joseph claimed he only had one wife, while it was closer to 30!), and Hyrum accused another man of teaching a "false doctrine," and threatened a Church court—all while several men in the Church were practicing polygamy. This seriously damages the credibility of Joseph

^y In England in 1850, John Taylor published a pamphlet in which he denied polygamy, and quoted section 101 to prove that the Church did not believe in polygamy. See Quinn, *Dialogue*, Vol. 18, No. 1, 9-105 & Tanner, *Changing World*, 262

^z *Doctrine and Covenants*: Official Declaration—1

Smith. Even worse is the fact that Joseph punished others^{aa} in an attempt to cover up the doctrine—making him even less believable.

There is no way to know when else Joseph might have been lying. What about his visions and revelations? What about the *Book of Mormon*? The list goes on and on. In this particular case, it is obvious that he was lying; yet, his statement sounds quite convincing on the surface, and his punishment of others concrete. Therefore, in other cases where he *seems* trustworthy, or less than trustworthy, why should anyone believe him? After finding out that he was willing to lie about one of the most important doctrines of the Church, it is very difficult to trust him again.

Here are two strong statements made by Brigham Young and that bring the validity of the Church today into question:

7). Journal of Discourses, Vol.11, p.269

(Brigham Young, August 19, 1866)

I heard the revelation on polygamy, and I believed it with all my heart, and I know it is from God—I know that he revealed it from heaven; I know that it is true, and understand the bearings of it and why it is. *"Do you think that we shall ever be admitted as a State into the Union without denying the principle of polygamy?" If we are not admitted until then, we shall never be admitted.* [italics added]

8). Journal of Discourses, Volume 11, p. 239

(Brigham Young, June 3, 1866)

We are told that if we would give up polygamy—which we know to be a doctrine revealed from heaven and it is God and the world for it—but *suppose this Church should give up this holy order of marriage, then would the devil, and all who are in league with him against the cause of God, rejoice that they had prevailed upon the Saints to refuse to obey one of the revelations and commandments of God to them.* [italics added]

Young stated that Utah would never become a state, if abandoning polygamy were a requirement. However, the Church did (officially) stop practicing polygamy in 1889, and was then accepted as a state six years later (polygamy had been the key issue preventing them from becoming a state). As well, he taught that the devil would rejoice if the Church ever stopped practicing polygamy (8). The devil must still be rejoicing over this, because the Church not only stopped practicing polygamy, they have started to pretend it never existed (e.g., editing the word *wives* out of the Sunday School manual). In the following quote, we can see Hinckley's (the current LDS prophet) attempt to play down its importance:

^{aa} Joseph Smith had the following published in the *Times and Seasons* in 1844: "...an Elder of the Church... by the name of Hiram Brown, has been preaching polygamy, and other false and corrupt doctrines....This is to notify him and the Church in general, that he has been cut off from the church, for his iniquity..." (*T&S*, Vol. 5, 423)

9). Gordon B. Hinckley
(Larry King Live Interview)

The figures that I have are from, between, 2% and 5% of our people were involved in it. It was a very limited practice, carefully safeguarded. In 1890 that practice was discontinued. The president of the Church, the man who occupied the position which I occupy today, went before the people, said he had prayed about it, worked on it, and had received from the Lord a revelation that it was time to stop, to discontinue it then. Then, that's 118 years ago. It's behind us.

This kind of statement from Hinckley is not surprising, because he began the Church's work in public relations many years ago. He clearly would like people to understand that "it's behind" them. It sounds as if he is embarrassed about the practice.

Wilford Woodruff (an apostle at the time) claimed following regarding polygamy:

10). Journal of Discourses, Volume 13, p. 166
(Wilford Woodruff, December 12, 1869)

If we were to do away with polygamy, it would only be one feather in the bird, one ordinance in the Church and kingdom. Do away with that, then we must do away with prophets and Apostles, with revelation and the gifts and graces of the Gospel, and finally give up our religion altogether and turn sectarians and do as the world does, then all would be right. We just can't do that, for God has commanded us to build up His kingdom and to bear our testimony to the nations of the earth, and we are going to do it, come life or come death. He has told us to do thus, and we shall obey Him in days to come as we have in days past.

This statement seems to negate the possibility that the Church still has prophets. The Church has clearly done away with polygamy, but still claims to have its prophets, apostles, and revelation. Dogmatic statements such as these were likely meant to encourage members, and let them know that the Church was not going to back down on such an important point. However, the obvious truth is that the Church finally gave in to political pressure, as Brigham Young prophesied would never happen. I do not particularly fault them for this decision, but it does raise the question of whether they "loved man more than God."

The most important issue with this controversial matter, however, is that the prophets have been shown to be untrustworthy. The issue caused them to lie about their involvement, rather than bravely announce their beliefs. It caused them to deny the possibility of giving up such a doctrine in the face of worldly oppression, and later excommunicate members for practicing it. The same issue has given rise to prophecies that the Church would fall and the Devil would rejoice if the practice were discontinued, followed in a few years by a declaration that the practice was to be stopped. Finally, it has resulted in statements like President Hinkley's, which minimize the importance of the doctrine. Unless the Devil is rejoicing and the Church has fallen, we can be certain that Brigham Young was a false prophet. If the Devil is rejoicing, the members are following a fallen Church. Either way, it is impossible for the current LDS Church to be true—either the prophecies are false (making the Church false), or the prophecies are true (meaning the Church has fallen).

5) Were early Church leaders racists, or simply following revelations that justified racist practices?

The Mormon Church has been accused of racist beliefs on several occasions. In my experience, most members deny the truth of such accusations. However, it is a well-known fact that the priesthood (rights to authority, leadership and blessings in the Mormon Church) was denied to black males until 1978.^{bb} Mormons often lay the blame on God, and claim that no one knows why He chose not to give blacks the priesthood until 1978. In other words, the prophets were simply following God's counsel when they instituted the ban. Unfortunately for the Mormon Church, these "prophets" did more than state that this was God's policy for the time being. They gave reasons for God's policy, explanations for the situation, and made prophecies about God's policy in the future. The sudden reversal in 1978 directly disagreed with many of their statements, raising the question of whether any part of the policy was inspired—or whether it was simply a result of racism.

The traces of racism still present in the Mormon Church can probably be traced back to Joseph Smith, the *Book of Mormon* and *Book of Abraham*. However, the more blatant racism seems to have begun with Brigham Young's leadership. The following statement shows that he interpreted the "mark" placed on Cain as being equivalent to being a Negro:

1). **Journal of Discourses, Volume 7, p. 290 - p. 291**

(Brigham Young, October 9, 1859)

You see some classes of the human family that are black, uncouth, uncomely, disagreeable and low in their habits, wild, and seemingly deprived of nearly all the blessings of the intelligence that is generally bestowed upon mankind. The first man that committed the odious crime of killing one of his brethren will be cursed the longest of any one of the children of Adam. Cain slew his brother. Cain might have been killed, and that would have put a termination to that line of human beings. This was not to be, and the Lord put a mark upon him, which is the flat nose and black skin. Trace mankind down to after the flood, and then another curse is pronounced upon the same race—that they should be the "servant of servants;" and they will be, until that curse is removed; and the Abolitionists cannot help it, nor in the least alter that decree. How long is that race to endure the dreadful curse that is upon them? That curse will remain upon them, and they never can hold the Priesthood or share in it until all the other descendants of Adam have received the promises and enjoyed the blessings of the Priesthood and the keys thereof. Until the last ones of the residue of Adam's children are brought up to that favourable position, the children of Cain cannot receive the first ordinances of the Priesthood. They were the first that were cursed, and they will be the last from whom the curse will be removed. When the residue of the family of Adam come up and receive their blessings, then the curse will be removed from the seed of Cain, and they will receive blessings in like proportion.
[italics added]

This quote from Brigham Young demonstrates his attitude. In addition to showing extreme disdain for black people, he explained that they would never have the priesthood, until the curse was removed. He claimed that the curse would not be removed until "all the other

^{bb} *Our Heritage: A Brief History of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints*, 127

descendants of Adam” received the priesthood. His statement that the black people are “uncouth” and “uncomely” demonstrates that he was disgusted with them. I ask the reader to judge: Are these the words of a prophet, or the words of a racist?

In 2 Nephi 5:21, Nephi explained that the “skin of blackness” was given to make the Lamanites less enticing to the Nephites, in addition to being coupled with a curse from God (showing racism against native Americans, as well). Even today, many Mormons believe that blacks are inferior to whites because of the statements made by Brigham Young and others.

Joseph Fielding Smith taught that our economic advantages and skin color are related, and that they are given as reward for our faithfulness in the preexistence:

2). Doctrines of Salvation, Volume 1, p. 61

(Joseph Fielding Smith)

There is a reason why one man is born black and with other disadvantages, while another is born white with great advantages. The reason is that we once had an estate before we came here, and were obedient, more or less, to the laws that were given us there. Those who were faithful in all things there received greater blessings here, and those who were not faithful received less. [italics original]

Smith’s statement leaves little room for leeway: blacks are people who were less faithful in the preexistence, and are disadvantaged in this life because of it. Later, in the same section of his book, he explained that everyone took one of two sides in the war in Heaven:

3). Doctrines of Salvation, Volume 1, p. 65-66

(Joseph Fielding Smith)

There were no neutrals in the war in heaven. All took sides either with Christ or with Satan. Every man had his agency there, and men receive rewards here based upon their actions there, just as they will receive rewards hereafter for deeds done in the body. The Negro, evidently, is receiving the reward he merits. [italics original]

According to this, every person chose either chose God, or Satan. The statement, “The Negro, evidently, is receiving the award he merits,” seems to imply that all the Negroes chose Satan, not God. I imagine that his justification for this remark lies in the fact that Africa is full of poverty, and that many blacks were forced into slavery. His remark is partially refuted by the fact that there are many successful African Americans living today, but this is irrelevant. What *is* relevant is that Joseph Fielding Smith made statements that in any other context would be considered extremely racist. Instead, they were considered authoritative history of the preexistence.

In this next statement from Brigham Young, he attacked the abolitionists (those who wanted to destroy slavery):

4). Journal of Discourses, Volume 10, p. 109
(Brigham Young, March 8, 1863)

The rank, rabid abolitionists, whom I call black-hearted Republicans, have set the whole national fabric on fire. Do you know this, Democrats? They have kindled the fire that is raging now from the north to the south, and from the south to the north. I am no abolitionist, neither am I a pro-slavery man; I hate some of their principles and especially some of their conduct, as I do the gates of hell. The Southerners make the negroes, and the Northerners worship them; this is all the difference between slaveholders and abolitionists. I would like the President of the United States and all the world to hear this.

Shall I tell you the law of God in regard to the African race? If the white man who belongs to the chosen seed mixes his blood with the seed of Cain, the penalty, under the law of God, is death on the spot. This will always be so. The nations of the earth have transgressed every law that God has given, they have changed the ordinances and broken every covenant made with the fathers, and they are like a hungry man that dreameth that he eateth, and he awaketh and behold he is empty. [italics added]

Presumably, the “fire that is raging now from north to south” referred to the Civil War (this was 1863). Apparently, he was unhappy with the war, and blamed it on the abolitionists. Then, Brigham asked his audience if they wished to hear the “law of God in regard to the African race.” He then proceeded to explain that when a white man mixed his blood (probably referring to marriage, or intercourse) with the “seed of Cain” (black people), the penalty was “death on the spot.” He further affirmed that it would “always be so.” Young’s statements were very serious. In addition, his statement that he was giving the “law of God” seems to indicate that this was not just his opinion, but something he considered doctrine.

This quote from John Taylor gives further evidence that Mormons believed those of African descent to be evil:

5). Journal of Discourses, Volume 22, p. 305
(John Taylor, August 28, 1881)

And after the flood we are told that the curse that had been pronounced upon Cain was continued through Ham's wife, as he had married a wife of that seed. And why did it pass through the flood? Because it was necessary that the devil should have a representation upon the earth as well as God; and that man should be a free agent to act for himself, and that all men might have the opportunity of receiving or rejecting the truth, and be governed by it or not according to their wishes and abide the result; and that those who would be able to maintain correct principles under all circumstances, might be able to associate with the Gods in the eternal worlds. It is the same eternal programme. God knew it and Adam knew it. [italics added]

Taylor claimed that blacks were on the earth as representatives of Satan! Apparently, he felt that they should not only to be denied the blessings of the priesthood, but also considered Satan’s servants. He finishes by saying, “God knew it and Adam knew it.” I sincerely doubt that he was merely expressing his opinion here. He chose to claim that this was God’s doctrine, not his own. Most importantly, Taylor was made President and prophet of

the Church one year before this statement. He was “God’s mouthpiece” and made a doctrinal statement condemning blacks. Although many members today would prefer to reject this teaching, an assertion that it is false would suggest that a false prophet led the Church.

The founder of Mormonism, Joseph Smith, declared that slavery was part of the law of God:

6). History of the Church: Volume II, p. 438

(Joseph Smith, April 9, 1842, 1836)

After having expressed myself so freely upon this subject, I do not doubt, but those who have been forward in raising their voices against the South, will cry out against me as being uncharitable, unfeeling, unkind, and wholly unacquainted with the Gospel of Christ. It is my privilege then to name certain passages from the Bible, and examine the teachings of the ancients upon the matter as the fact is uncontrovertible [sic] *that the first mention we have of slavery is found in the Holy Bible, pronounced by a man who was perfect in his generation, and walked with God.* And so far from that prediction being averse to the mind of God, *it remains as a lasting monument of the decree of Jehovah,* to the shame and confusion of all who have cried out against the South, *in consequence of their holding the sons of Ham in servitude.* [italics added]

The first point Smith made was that the teaching of slavery had biblical precedent (slavery was practiced in biblical times). Further, he claimed that the existence of slavery was a “monument of the decree of Jehovah’s,” and an extension of the biblical teaching of “holding the sons of Ham in servitude.” At a different time, when asked if Mormons were abolitionists, he declared that Mormons did not “believe in setting the Negroes free.”^{cc} I feel it should be obvious that Smith allowed his natural biases to affect his religion.

A few months after his previous comments on the war, Brigham Young prophesied that the result would not be freedom for the slaves:

8). Journal of Discourses, Volume 10, p. 250

(Brigham Young, October 6, 1863)

Ham will continue to be the servant of servants, as the Lord has decreed, until the curse is removed. *Will the present struggle free the slave? No;* but they are now wasting away the black race by thousands. Many of the blacks are treated worse than we treat our dumb brutes; and men will be called to judgment for the way they have treated the negro, and they will receive the condemnation of a guilty conscience, by the just Judge whose attributes are justice and truth.

Treat the slaves kindly and let them live, for Ham must be the servant of servants until the curse is removed. *Can you destroy the decrees of the Almighty? You cannot.* Yet our Christian brethren think that they are going to overthrow the sentence of the Almighty upon the seed of Ham. *They cannot do that,* though they may kill them by thousands and tens of thousands. [italics added]

Young’s policy on slaves was to treat nicely and allow them to live. He explained that “Ham must be the servant of servants,” which apparently was his motivation for letting them live. Finally, he explained that other Christians were attempting to “overthrow the Sentence of the Almighty” by freeing the slaves. What was intended as an insult for all other Christians

^{cc} Joseph Smith, *Teachings of the Prophet Joseph Smith*, 120

would today be considered a great compliment. The inverse, however, is also true. Young's attempt to vindicate the Church's position that slavery was of God will forever demonstrate his (and the Church's) racist beliefs. Additionally, his prediction that the slaves would not be freed by the war shows his lack of inspiration.

To give a more recent perspective, the Mormon author John L. Lund explained quite positively that the Church would never back down on the "Negro question":

9). *The Church and the Negro*, 1967, pp. 104-5

(John L. Lund, as quoted in *The Changing World of Mormonism*, p. 310).

Those who believe that the Church 'gave in' on the polygamy issue and subsequently should give in on the Negro question are not only misinformed about Church History, but are apparently unaware of Church doctrine.... Therefore, those who hope that pressure will bring about a revelation need to take a closer look at Mormon history and the order of heaven

Admittedly, Lund was not a Church leader, but his statements reflect the truth. He explained that anyone who imagined the Church would "give in" obviously did not understand the doctrine. He claimed that anyone who hoped that "pressure would bring about a revelation" needed to check their Mormon history, and the "order of heaven." In truth, an examination of Mormon history would have led anyone to agree with Lund. The Church's doctrines simply did not allow for blacks to have the priesthood. However, perhaps those who believed that the Church should "give in" were aware of a doctrine that Lund overlooked: When the prophet gives a new "revelation," it supercedes all previous ones.^{dd} Of course, this is at odds with the statements that revelations are true only if they "square with the revelations," but that is not the point. The point is, Mormons feel that a prophet has the right to override the words of older prophets (of course, the old one is always dead, and cannot argue).

As most people are now aware, in 1978 the LDS church did exactly what Lund predicted they would not. In contradiction with everything Brigham Young had ever said on the subject, the blacks were no longer considered "servants," and could have the priesthood—the Church had backed down on their core doctrine that there was a curse on the "seed of Cain." Supposedly, President Kimball received a revelation allowing this action—but, no "revelation" was given to the body of the Church, and none is known to exist. All that can be found on the subject is the letter now included at the end of the D&C. In other words, there was a change in policy, but no change in doctrine was made.

Considering the political pressure that was put on the Church directly before this action, it hardly seems likely that it was the result of a revelation. In 1969, Stanford announced that it would schedule no competitions with BYU; this was due to the Church's policy on racism. In 1974, the NAACP filed a charge against the Boy Scouts of America due to the LDS policy that prevented blacks from being Patrol Leaders (at this time, only the deacon quorum's leader could be the Patrol Leader). Additionally, there was a large controversy in 1976 after Douglas Wallace ordained a black man to the priesthood. Wallace was excommunicated, and the Church apparently ordered a police stakeout at his house, which resulted in the injury of a police officer (through no fault of Wallace's).^{ee}

^{dd} Ezra Taft Benson, "Fourteen Fundamentals in Following the Prophet," *Classic Speeches*, 17-27

^{ee} Tanner, *Changing World of Mormonism*, 319-321

In the following excerpt from an interview, LeGrand Richards admitted that much of the motivation for the change came from problems in Brazil, and the fact that the majority of the population was part Negro:

10). Interview with Apostle LeGrand Richards

(By Wesley P. Walters and Chris Vlachos)

WALTERS:

On this revelation, of the priesthood to the Negro, I've heard all kinds of stories: I've heard that Joseph Smith appeared; and then I heard another story that Spencer Kimball had, had a concern about this for some time, and simply shared it with the apostles, and they decided that this was the right time to move in that direction. Are any of those stories true, or are they all?

RICHARDS:

Well, the last one is pretty true, and I might tell you what provoked it in a way. Down in Brazil, there is so much Negro blood in the population there that it's hard to get leaders that don't have Negro blood in them. We just built a temple down there. It's going to be dedicated in October. All those people with Negro blood in them have been raising the money to build that temple. If we don't change, then they can't even use it. Well, Brother Kimball worried about it, and he prayed a lot about it.

He asked each one of us of the Twelve if we would pray - and we did - that the Lord would give him the inspiration to know what the will of the Lord was. Then he invited each one of us in his office - individually, because you know when you are in a group, you can't always express everything that's in your heart. You're part of the group, you see - so he interviewed each one of us, personally, to see how we felt about it, and he asked us to pray about it. Then he asked each one of us to hand in all the references we had, for, or against that proposal. See, he was thinking favorably toward giving the colored people the priesthood.

With all of the political pressure involved, how likely does it seem that Kimball actually received a revelation? As Lund pointed out, to think this kind of change could be made one would have to be totally ignorant of the Church's stance on the matter. However, as with the polygamy issue, the Church finally gave in to political pressure, denied its heritage, and changed its doctrine.

In my opinion, this was a wise move, and I am pleased that Kimball made this decision. This change marked the beginning of the erosion of racism in the Church. Although many in the Church still believe that intermarriage is wrong (unfortunately, Kimball did not address this issue), and others believe the statements that blacks are inferior (after all, it was the "prophet" Brigham Young who said it), the Church is slowly changing for the better. Someday, there may be no trace of racism left in the Church.

On the other hand, this sudden reversal of position on the matter makes the idea of "revelation" highly suspect. In my opinion, the Church made the best political decision it could have, at the time. The Church could quite easily have made the same decision without revelation; in fact, it was revelation that prevented them from doing it earlier, when it would have been more judicious. Finally, the Church was forced to face the reality that its doctrines no longer fit with the times. Blacks were no longer slaves, and the government had actually started to treat them with some respect. The only thing that made Latter Day Saints change more slowly than others was that they believed they had religious backing on the racism issue. Finally, they just "gave in."

In fairness to the early Church and the obvious and pervasive racism, those people were probably just reacting to the times in which they lived. When the Church chose to accept blacks as equals, they again were simply reacting to the circumstances that beset them. The question becomes, did revelation really have anything to do with it? The reader can judge for himself.

Thus, I believe that the allegations of racism in the Church were founded in truth. Not only was this racism widespread, it was so pervasive that it was included in sermons given by the prophets of the Church, the “mouthpieces of God.” Unless we are to believe that God would have made those racist statements (which seems unlikely since the “mouthpieces” now sing a different tune), it should be clear that the prophets of the Mormon Church do not speak for God.

It is also unfortunate for the Church that prophetic statements like those of Brigham Young have been proven wrong by history. Once again, their inaccuracy should be sufficient to convince anyone that they were not speaking for God, but were making statements based on their own biases and reasoning. The reader can look at quotes (4) and (8) again, and see if Young’s prophetic words have been disproved. If they have (and I do not see how it can be interpreted otherwise), it is not unreasonable to conclude that these were false prophets, and thus that the Church is false as well.

Chapter 4

Joseph Smith, the Prophet

At one time in my life, I considered Joseph Smith to be one of the most amazing persons in the history of the earth. He seemed more real to me than Jesus, but in many ways just as amazing. I believed (having been taught) that Joseph had met with every prophet since the beginning of time, and knew far more than anyone alive during his time, or since. As I studied his work more and more, it slowly became obvious to me that, although an incredible man, Joseph was not the person I had believed him to be. Those things that I no longer believe about Joseph are as follows: (1) That Joseph Smith ever spoke with God, angels or any other supernatural being; (2) That Joseph Smith was a true prophet, or seer, and was able to see the future; (3) That Joseph Smith restored the ancient “Christian” temple ceremony; (4) That the “revelations” found in the *Doctrine and Covenants* truly came from God. I also do not believe Joseph Smith was anything like the good-natured farm boy that is usually portrayed in Church Histories, but I will not make an further issue of his character here, except to quote one statement that he made:

God is in the still small voice. In all these affidavits, indictments, it is all of the devil—all corruption. Come on! ye prosecutors! ye false swearers! All hell, boil over! Ye burning mountains, roll down your lava! for I will come out on the top at last. I have more to boast of than ever any man had. I am the only man that has ever been able to keep a whole church together since the days of Adam. A large majority of the whole have stood by me. Neither Paul, John, Peter, nor Jesus ever did it. I boast that no man ever did such a work as I. The followers of Jesus ran away from Him; but the Latter-day Saints never ran away from me yet. You know my daily walk and conversation. I am in the bosom of a virtuous and good people. How I do love to hear the wolves howl! When they can get rid of me, the devil will also go. (*HOTC*, Vol. 6, p. 408)

1). Did Joseph Smith see God, Jesus Christ, or angels?

Joseph Smith—History: 11-19 (Official Account of First Vision)

While I was laboring under the extreme difficulties caused by the contests of these parties of religionists, I was one day reading the Epistle of James, first chapter and fifth verse, which reads: 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.... So, in accordance with this, my determination to ask of God, I retired to the woods to make the attempt.... I kneeled down and began to offer up the desires of my heart to God. I had scarcely done so, when immediately I was seized upon by some power which entirely overcame me, and had such an astonishing influence over me as to bind my tongue so that I could not speak....

I saw a pillar of light exactly over my head, above the brightness of the sun, which descended gradually until it fell upon me. It no sooner appeared than I found myself delivered from the enemy which held me bound. When the light rested upon me I saw two Personages, whose brightness and glory defy all description, standing above me in the air. One of them spake unto me, calling me by name and said, pointing to the other—This is My Beloved Son. Hear Him!

My object in going to inquire of the Lord was to know which of all the sects was right, that I might know which to join. No sooner, therefore, did I get possession of myself, so as to be able to speak, than I asked the Personages who stood above me in the light, which of all the sects was right (for at this time it had never entered into my heart that all were wrong)—and which I should join.

I was answered that I must join none of them, for they were all wrong....

The most important claim ever made by Joseph Smith was probably the “First Vision.” It is the first extraordinary thing about the Church that missionaries share with those who are interested. The published account is remarkably simple and amazing. Joseph claimed that, because of confusion, he prayed to God for enlightenment. Then, he had the most amazing vision in the history of Judaism and Christianity—God and Jesus Christ appeared, and he was instructed not to join any existing Church! Gordon B. Hinckley confirmed that the experience was one of the “cornerstones” of the Church:

1). Gordon B. Hinckley, “The Cornerstones of Our Faith,” (Ensign, Nov. 1984, 50)

The second cornerstone—the first vision of the Prophet Joseph Smith. The year was 1820, the season spring. The boy with questions walked into the grove of his father’s farm. There, finding himself alone, he pleaded in prayer for that wisdom which James promised would be given liberally to those who ask of God in faith. (See James 1:5.) There, in circumstances which he has described in much detail, he beheld the Father and the Son, the great God of the universe and the risen Lord, both of whom spoke to him.

If true, the First Vision should be enough to convince anyone that Joseph Smith was called to be God's prophet. Unfortunately, Joseph had no witnesses who could verify his story. So, to believe his story, one would have to take Joseph's word, or have some kind of "revelation" of its truth. Most Mormons (and typically all missionaries) claim that God has revealed the truth of Joseph's story to them—they even teach potential converts to seek such a revelation before baptism.

The words of Joseph Fielding Smith now become important:

2). Doctrines of Salvation, Volume 1, p. 188
(Joseph Fielding Smith)

Mormonism, as it is called, must stand or fall on the story of Joseph Smith. He was either a prophet of God, divinely called, properly appointed and commissioned, or he was one of the biggest frauds this world has ever seen. There is no middle ground.

If Joseph Smith was a deceiver, who willfully attempted to mislead the people, then he should be exposed; his claims should be refuted, and his doctrines shown to be false, for the doctrines of an impostor cannot be made to harmonize in all particulars with divine truth. If his claims and declarations were built upon fraud and deceit, there would appear many errors and contradictions, which would be easy to detect.

He claimed that, if Joseph's declarations were built on "fraud and deceit" that there would be many "errors and contradictions," which one could easily detect. Apparently, Joseph Fielding Smith believed that the lack of contradictions in Joseph's teachings were proof that they were true. In fact, he went on to make several non-spiritual arguments that he claimed proved Joseph was a prophet. I agree that, if Joseph were a fraud, there would probably be errors. However, even if there were no errors, it would not prove that Joseph's story was true.

The truth, however, is that there *were* many "errors and contradictions" (in this case, in the story of the First Vision). Additionally, they are not difficult to detect, although it seems the Church has attempted to keep some of them from surfacing.

The first contradiction can be found in the published version of the First Vision:

3). Joseph Smith—History 1:10, 18 (Pearl of Great Price, 1981 printing)

In the midst of this war of words and tumult of opinions, I often said to myself: What is to be done? Who of all these parties are right; or, *are they all wrong together?* If any one of them be right, which is it, and how shall I know it?

...

My object in going to inquire of the Lord was to know which of all the sects was right, that I might know which to join. No sooner, therefore, did I get possession of myself, so as to be able to speak, than I asked the Personages who stood above me in the light, which of all the sects was right (*for at this time it had never entered into my heart that all were wrong*)—and which I should join. [*italics added*]

In verse 10 of *Joseph Smith History*, Joseph explained that he often wondered which religion was correct, or if all were wrong. Based on this, it would be safe to say that he had considered the possibility that all of the sects were in the wrong. However, in verse 18, he claimed that he asked the Lord which sect he should join, adding that he had never imagined that all were wrong. Such a contradiction is not particularly significant, because this story was written many years after the date of the alleged vision. Smith could easily have forgotten when he first allowed for the possibility of all churches being in error. Thus, although this proves

Joseph did not give a totally accurate representation of the account, to me it does not indicate a deliberate falsehood.

In fact, I would probably have completely forgotten this small problem, were it not for one thing: at some point, someone altered verse 18 to avoid the contradiction. The phrase, “(for at this time it had never entered into my heart that all were wrong)” was removed in the 1878 edition of the *Pearl of Great Price*:

4). Joseph Smith—History 1:18 (evolution)

Pearl of Great Price, p. 38 (1851 printing)

My object in going to enquire of the Lord was to know which of all the sects was right, that I might know which to join. No sooner therefore did I get possession of myself, so as to be able to speak, than I asked the personages who stood above me in the light, which of all the sects was right (for at this time it had never entered into my heart that all were wrong), and which I should join.

Writings of Joseph Smith 2:18 (Pearl of Great Price, 1973 printing)

My object in going to inquire of the Lord was to know which of all the sects was right, that I might know which to join. No sooner, therefore, did I get possession of myself, so as to be able to speak, than I asked the Personages who stood above me in the light, which of all the sects was right—and which I should join.

Joseph Smith—History 1:18 (Pearl of Great Price, 1981 printing)

My object in going to inquire of the Lord was to know which of all the sects was right, that I might know which to join. No sooner, therefore, did I get possession of myself, so as to be able to speak, than I asked the Personages who stood above me in the light, which of all the sects was right (for at this time it had never entered into my heart that all were wrong)—and which I should join.

These excerpts show that the text remained this way until the 1981 edition, when, to their credit, the new editors saw fit to restore what had been erased. It is absolutely impossible to believe that this phrase was accidentally removed, in my opinion. Most likely, someone viewed this as a contradiction (correctly), and chose to remove it to fortify Smith’s testimony. This person would have had enough power to effect such a change, meaning that he mostly likely would have been a Church leader (my guess is Orson Pratt, because he was the editor).

Knowing that the First Vision story contains a contradiction that upset early leaders of the Church is important. This proves that, while leaders have always emphasized the strength of Joseph’s story when speaking to members, they were not always so confident. In this case, it appears that a Church leader was afraid that the truth would be damaging to the Church. Therefore, he (or they) decided to bury it. Discovering this was very disturbing to me. I was insulted that someone would alter the evidence to make it more convincing. However, this is a very mild example compared to what else has been concealed.

Before looking at some of the damaging evidence against the authenticity of the First Vision, I want to point out something very interesting. The early leaders of the Church did not appear to understand the First Vision as it appears today in the *Pearl of Great Price*. For example, this quote from Brigham Young demonstrates that he believed the Lord sent *an angel* to command Joseph not to join any Church:

5). Journal of Discourses, Volume 2, p. 171 (Brigham Young, February 18, 1855)

But as it was in the days of our Savior, so was it in the advent of this new dispensation. It was not in accordance with the notions, traditions, and pre-conceived ideas of the American people. The messenger did not come to an eminent divine of any of the so-called orthodoxy, he did not adopt their interpretation of the Holy Scriptures. The Lord did not come with the armies of heaven, in power and great glory, nor send His messengers panoplied with aught else than the truth of heaven, to communicate to the meek the lowly, the youth of humble origin, the sincere enquirer after the knowledge of God. But He did send His angel to this same obscure person, Joseph Smith Jun., who afterwards became a Prophet, Seer, and Revelator, and informed him that he should not join any of the religious sects of the day, for they were all wrong; that they were following the precepts of men instead of the Lord Jesus; that He had a work for him to perform, inasmuch as he should prove faithful before Him.

According to JSH 1:19, it was Jesus Christ himself who told Joseph this. Technically, Brigham Young's statement does not rule out the possibility that God and Jesus came. However, Heber C. Kimball's statement shows similar confusion:

6). Journal of Discourses, Volume 6, p. 29
(Heber C. Kimball, November 8, 1857)

Do you suppose that God in person called upon Joseph Smith, our Prophet? God called upon him; but God did not come himself and call, but he sent Peter to do it. Do you not see? He sent Peter and sent Moroni to Joseph, and told him that he had got the plates. Did God come himself? No: he sent Moroni and told him there was a record....

While not specifically referring to the First Vision, Kimball seemed to be making that argument that God used messengers to communicate to Joseph Smith, and did not appear in person. John Taylor also did not claim that it was Christ who spoke with Joseph:

7). Journal of Discourses, Volume 10, p. 126 - p. 129
(John Taylor, March 1, 1863)

How did this state of things called Mormonism originate? We read that an angel came down and revealed himself to Joseph Smith and manifested unto him in vision the true position of the world in a religious point of view. He was surrounded with light and glory while the heavenly messenger communicated these things unto him, after a series of visitations and communications from the Apostle Peter and others who held the authority of the holy Priesthood, not only on the earth formerly but in the heavens afterwards.

Taylor explicitly stated that an angel revealed the religious position of the world to Joseph Smith. Conversely, according to *JSH*, it was Jesus who told him that all the sects were wrong.^a George Albert Smith's explanation of what happened when Joseph prayed was quit clear:

8). Journal of Discourses, Volume 12, p. 334
(George Albert Smith, November 15, 1868)

^a Joseph Smith—History, vv. 17-20

Joseph Smith had attended these meetings, and when this result was reached he saw clearly that something was wrong. He had read the Bible and had found that passage in James which says "If any of you lack wisdom let him ask of God that giveth to all men liberally and upbraideth not," and taking this literally, he went humbly before the Lord and inquired of Him, and the Lord answered his prayer and revealed to Joseph, by the ministration of angels, the true condition of the religious world. When the holy angel appeared, Joseph inquired which of all these denominations was right and which he should join, and was told they were all wrong,—they had all gone astray, transgressed the laws, changed the ordinances and broken the everlasting covenant, and that the Lord was about to restore the priesthood and establish His Church, which would be the only true and living Church on the face of the whole earth.

Smith explained that Joseph was answered by the “ministration of angels” (*not* a divine epiphany). He also explained that Joseph asked his question (about which Church to join) of the “holy angel.” In *JSH*, the only person Joseph posed the question to was Christ himself (and Christ was the only one who answered). Therefore, this explanation by George Albert Smith appears to contradict the official version. At a later time, he reaffirmed his understanding:

9). Journal of Discourses, Volume 13, p. 77 - p. 78
(George Albert Smith, June 20, 1869)

When Joseph Smith was about 15 years old there was, in the western part of the State of New York, a considerable excitement upon the subject of religion. The various denominations in that part of the country were stirred up with a spirit of revival. They held protracted meetings and many were converted. At the end of this excitement a scramble ensued as to which of the denominations should have the proselytes. Of the family of Joseph Smith, his mother, his brothers Hyrum and Samuel, and sister Sophronia, became members of the Presbyterian Church. Joseph reflected much upon the subject of religion, and was astonished at the ill-feeling that seemed to have grown out of the division of the spoils, if we may so use the term, at the close of the reformation. He spent much time in prayer and reflection and in seeking the Lord. He was led to pray upon the subject in consequence of the declaration of the Apostle James: "If any of you lack wisdom, let him ask of God that giveth to all men liberally and upbraideth not." [James, 1st chap., 5th verse.] He sought the Lord by day and by night, and was enlightened by the vision of an holy angel. When this personage appeared to him, one of his first inquiries was, "Which of the denominations of Christians in the vicinity was right?" He was told they had all gone astray, they had wandered into darkness, and that God was about to restore the Gospel in its simplicity and purity to the earth; he was, consequently, directed not to join any one of them, but to be humble and seek the Lord with all his heart, and that from time to time he should be taught and instructed in relation to the right way to serve the Lord.

Once again, he stated that it was “an holy angel” who appeared after Joseph’s prayer. This account is especially good, because it leaves no doubt about which experience he was referring to—the context of the vision is exactly the same as that in *JSH*: Joseph’s study was prompted by all of the different churches, his prayer was given in response to James 1:5, and his query was, in effect, “Which church is true?” But the key element—that God and Christ came, and personally answered his question—is missing from George Albert’s account, replaced by an angel performing the same tasks.

Wilford Woodruff made a similar statement:

10). Journal of Discourses, Volume 13, p. 324

(Wilford Woodruff, September 5, 1869)

This day we have lived to see. This tabernacle, this congregation, and the multitudes through the valleys of the mountains are the fruits of this work. How did it commence? It commenced by an angel of God flying through the midst of heaven and visiting a young man named Joseph Smith, in the year 1827. That was the time of a great awakening among the sectarians of the day—a day of revivals and protracted meetings, when the people were called upon to join themselves to the sectarian churches. This young man looked around amid the confusion among the different sects, each proclaiming the plan of salvation differently, and each claiming it was right and that all others were wrong; in the midst of this contention he did not know which to join. While in this state of uncertainty he turned to the Bible, and there saw that passage in the epistle of James which directs him that lacks wisdom to ask of God. He went into his secret chamber and asked the Lord what he must do to be saved. The Lord heard his prayer and sent His angel to him, who informed him that all the sects were wrong, and that the God of heaven was about to establish His work upon the earth.

This version departs from the official version in the same way that the others have: instead of God and Christ answering his prayer, an angel visited Smith. Additionally, Woodruff refers to the grove as Joseph's "secret chamber," which could simply be an allegorical reference to the biblical mandate to pray secretly in the closet (Matthew 6:6), or yet another contradiction. In any case, the key component of Joseph's vision is missing: there is no reference of God or Christ appearing. Brigham Young himself (Joseph's successor, and second prophet of the Church) did not fare much better in describing the event:

11). Journal of Discourses, Volume 18, p. 239

(Brigham Young, June 23, 1874)

...Do we believe that the Lord sent his messengers to Joseph Smith, and commanded him to refrain from joining any Christian church, and to refrain from the wickedness he saw in the churches, and finally delivered to him a message informing him that the Lord was about to establish his kingdom on the earth, and led him on step by step until he gave him the revelation concerning the plates? Yes, this is all correct...

As late as 1874, Brigham Young taught that it was the Lord's "messengers" that told Joseph to "refrain from joining any Christian church...." A careful reading of this quote reveals that it is possible to interpret it differently. It could mean that the Lord both "sent his messengers" and "commanded him to refrain from joining any Christian church" (personally). However, as the rest of the paragraph (and other sources) indicates, the Lord might have done these things, but it was through his messengers, not personally. For example, according to JSH 1:16, it was Moroni who led him on "step by step." The preface that the "Lord sent his messengers" seems to designate those messengers as the ones who "delivered to him a message." It is not unreasonable to assume this, considering it would agree with his 1855 account (5), 13 years after the official version was published.

According to the version of the First Vision that is used today, these "prophets, seers, and revelators" were incorrect in their telling of Joseph's story. None of these accounts seem to indicate a belief that God *or* Jesus appeared to Joseph Smith. The consistent teaching seemed

to be that the Lord sent an angel (or angels) to answer his prayer. Joseph's account makes it clear that it was Jesus himself who answered him, not some angel sent by the Lord. So, why was there so much confusion about the story? The First Vision, after all, is one of the "cornerstones" of the Church. Forty-four years after the organization of the Church, the president and prophet still could not correctly describe this "cornerstone." It is quite remarkable that he, and so many others were totally ignorant of the "truth," especially in light of the fact that the First Vision account had been published in 1842, and was made part of the *Pearl of Great Price* in 1851. Is there any excuse for their misunderstanding?

Not surprisingly, there is a simple explanation for their confusion. The confusion all seems to stem from the fact that Joseph Smith told several different versions of his story. According to one source, there are nine different accounts of the First Vision, some agreeing better than others. One was found on a missionary pamphlet in Germany, and others are statements from individuals who heard the story directly from Smith. Orson Pratt published still another account. In the *Messenger and Advocate*, Oliver Cowdery published a version where he combined the angel Moroni's visit with the First Vision.^b Here, I am only interested in those that came directly from Joseph Smith. Other sources might be considered untrustworthy, which diminishes their usefulness.

The first known account of the first vision comes from a self-history that Joseph started in 1831 or 1832. The account is long and rambles a little, but I feel that it is necessary to read the whole account to deal with the discrepancies:

14). Joseph's 1831/1832 History

(*American Prophet's Record*, p. 5-6)

[/word/ indicates the word was inserted above the line, ~~word~~ indicates the word (or part of the word) was crossed out; I have attempted to accurately retain the original spelling]

At about the age of twelve years my mind become seriously imprest with regard to the all important concerns for the welfare of my immortal Soul which led me to searching the scriptures believing, as I was taught, that they contained the word of God. Thus applying myself to them and my intimate acquaintance with those of different denominations led me to marvel exceedingly. For I discovered that /they/ did not ~~adorn~~/ ~~instead~~ of adorning their profession by a holy walk and Godly conversation agreeable to what I found contained in that sacred depository. This was a grief to my Soul.

Thus from the age of twelve years to fifteen I pondered many things in my heart concerning the situation of the world of mankind, the contentions and divi/si/ons, the wicke/d/ness and abominations, and the darkness which pervaded the minds of mankind. My mind become exceedingly distressed for I become convicted of my sins and by searching the scriptures I found that ~~man~~ /mankind/ did not come unto the Lord but that they had apostatised from the true and living faith. There was no society or denomination that built upon the gospel of Jesus Christ as recorded in the *New Testament* and I felt to mourn for my own sins and for the sins of the world.

For I learned in the scriptures that God was the same yesterday to day and forever. That he was no respecter to persons, for he was God. For I looked upon the sun, the glorious luminary of the earth. And also the moon rolling in their majesty through the heavens. Also the stars shining in their courses. And the earth also upon which I stood. And the beast of the field and the fowls of heaven and the fish of the waters. And also man walking forth upon the face of the earth in majesty and in the

^b *Mormons In Transition*, <http://www.irr.org/mit/First-Vision-Accounts.html>

strength of beauty whose power and intilgence in governing the things which are so exceding great and marvilous even in the likeness of him who created ~~him~~ /them/.

When I considered upon these things my heart exclaimed, “Well hath the wise man said ~~he~~ /it is a/ fool /that/ saith in his heart, “There is no God.” My heart exclaimed, “All these bear testimony and bespeak an omnipotent and omnipreasant power. A being who makith Laws and decreeeth and bindeth all things in their bounds. Who filleth Eternity. Who was, is and will be from all Eternity to Eternity.” When I considered all these things and that /that/ being seeketh such to worship him as worship him in spirit and in truth. Therefore I cried unto the Lord for mercy for there was none else to whom I could go and to obtain mercy. The Lord heard my cry in the wilderness and while in /the/ attitude of calling upon the Lord /in the 16th year of my age/ a pillar of ~~fire~~ light above the brightness of the sun at noon day come down from above and rested upon me. I was filled with the spirit of God and the /Lord/ opened the heavens upon me and I saw the Lord.

He spake unto me saying, “Joseph /my son/ thy sins are forgiven thee. Go thy way, walk in my statutes and keep my commandments. Behold I am the Lord of glory. I was crucified for the world that all those who believe on my name may have Eternal life. /Behold/ the world lieth in sin at this time and none doeth good, no not one. They have turned asside from the gospel and keep not /my/ commandments. They draw near to me with their lips while their hearts are far from me and mine anger is kindling against the inhabitants of the earth to visit them acording to th/e/ir ungodliness and to bring to pass that which /hath/ been spoken by the mouth of the prophets and Ap/o/stles. Behold and lo, I come quickly as it written of me in the cloud /clothed/ in the glory of my Father.

My soul was filled with love and for many days I could rejoyce with great Joy and the Lord was with me. But could find none that would believe the heavenly vision nevertheless I pondered these things in my heart.

Because Joseph did not use punctuation, and corrected himself by crossing out or inserting words later, some punctuation was added (in *American Prophet's Record*). However, once read, the account clearly contradicts the official account. First, Joseph said he “cried unto the Lord for mercy,” implying that he prayed for forgiveness of his sins. Then, the account states that the Lord (Jesus) told him that his sins were forgiven. Additionally, the Lord taught that “the world lieth in sin,” and seemed to imply that all existing churches were in error; however, he did not instruct Joseph to avoid joining any church. Another difference is that Joseph claimed to be in his 16th year, which disagrees with JSH 1:7, although this is trivial compared to the other differences. Finally, Joseph did not mention God in this account.

The setting for the vision is drastically different, however. In the official version, Joseph’s reasons for praying were to ask God which church to join. In this version, Joseph concluded *through study of the scriptures* that all churches were in error. This is significant because it implies that Joseph was capable of making this determination on his own. It considerably reduces the importance of and need for the vision. This vision is more like a “Christian experience” in which a person feels that he has “been saved,” than like a divine message to Joseph that began his calling as prophet. Most importantly, this account is sufficiently different from the official version to suggest that at least one is not completely accurate.

In yet another account of the First Vision, Joseph came closer on several counts, but the differences are still significant. This account was written in 1835, in Joseph Smith’s diary:

15). Joseph Smith Diary, Nov. 9, 1835
(*American Prophet's Record*, p. 51)

Being wrought up in my mind respecting the subject of religion and looking at the different systems taught the children of men, I knew not who was right or who was wrong and I considered it of the first importance that I should be right, in matters that involve eternal consequences.

Being thus perplexed in mind I retired to the silent grove and bowed down before the Lord, under a realising sense that he had said (if the Bible be true), "Ask and ye shall receive, knock and it shall be opened. Seek and ye shall find." Again, "If any man lack wisdom, let him ask of God, who giveth to all men liberally and upbraideth not."

Information was what I most desired at this time and with a fixed determination to obtain it, I called upon the Lord for the first time, in the place above stated. Or in other words I made a fruitless attempt to p[er]ay...

My mouth was open and my tongue liberated and I called on the Lord in mighty prayer. A pillar of fire appeared above my head. It presently rested down upon ~~my head~~ /me/, and filled me with Joy unspeakable. A personage appeared in the midst of this pillar of flame which was spread all around, and yet nothing consumed. Another personage soon appeared like unto the first. He said unto me "Thy sins are forgiven thee." He testified unto me that Jesus Christ is the Son of God; /I saw many angels in this vision/ I was about 14 years old when I received this first communication.

In this version, Joseph spoke briefly of the vision. He stated that two figures appeared, which agrees with the official version. However, he stated that they appeared at different times, which disagrees. One of the two told Joseph that his sins were forgiven, and testified that Jesus Christ was "the Son of God." To me, this implies that the speaker was not actually Jesus, although he could have referred to Himself in the third person. Joseph also stated that he saw "many angels in this vision." The official version contains nothing about angels. Additionally, the dialogues of the two versions are mutually exclusive, as in the previous account. That is, nothing that was said in this version appears in the official version, and nothing from the official version appears in this one.

The documents containing these different versions of the First Vision were kept by the LDS Church for some time. No one was allowed to see them upon request. Finally, around 1970, copies of these were released in *Brigham Young University Studies* and *Dialogue: A Journal of Mormon Thought*.^c Since this time, apologists have been forced to deal with the fact that Joseph's published account is quite different from other, unpublished accounts. Their most predictable explanation is that Joseph simply gave different details every time he told (or wrote) the story. While this is reasonable, the extent to which the details differ is not.

All of the details vary to some degree, which is understandable. However, the key details vary significantly. For example, neither in 1832 nor 1835 did Joseph seem to realize that he had seen God as part of his vision. In the 1835 version, Joseph did not mention being taught not to join any sect, which is one of the most important parts of the vision. Additionally, in 1835, he did not even assert that Jesus appeared; he referred nebulously to two figures, one of which referred to Jesus in the third person. In the 1832 version, Joseph prayed for forgiveness, and received this forgiveness. Although the Lord did tell Joseph that there was a lack of righteous people on the earth, it was not as a response to any question by Joseph. He never instructed Joseph not to join a church; it would have been unnecessary, for Joseph had

^c Tanner, *Changing World of Mormonism*, 155

already concluded that everyone had apostatized, through his study of the scriptures (in that version).

Thus, the differences in these accounts are significant enough to suggest that the official version may not be completely accurate. The most disturbing part is that the key elements of the story were not consistent: God appearing and introducing Jesus, Joseph's reasons for praying, the message given by Christ, the presence of angels, and Joseph's age. When faced with these obtrusive omissions in the differing accounts, I am forced to conclude that Joseph himself was unsure of what happened. It would be incredible if Joseph had forgotten these important details in 1832, but somehow remembered them 18 years after the vision. Therefore, it appears that the 1842 (written in 1838) account was heavily embellished to include God and a firm statement that all churches were false. This makes Joseph's claim much more difficult to believe—he could not keep his story straight.

In a chapter titled, "Latter Day Saints," and as part of a compilation of religious histories, Joseph Smith's story about the founding of the Church was published in 1844. Joseph's chapter took the form of a letter to the compiler, I. Daniel Rupp. The following is an excerpt from that chapter:

19). Joseph Smith, 1844

(An Original History, pp. 404-410)

My father was a farmer, and taught me the art of husbandry. When about fourteen years of age, I began to reflect upon the importance of being prepared for a future state; and upon inquiring the place of salvation, I found that there was a great clash in religious sentiment; if I went to one society they referred me to one place, and another to another; each one pointing to his particular creed as the "summum bonum" of perfection. Considering that all could not be right, and that God could not be the author of so much confusion, I determined to investigate the subject more fully, believing that if God had a church, it would not be split up into factions, and that if he taught one society to worship one way, and administer in one set of ordinances, he would not teach another principles which were diametrically opposed. Believing the word of God, I had confidence in the declaration of James, "If any man lack wisdom let him ask of God, who giveth to all men liberally and upbraideth not, and it shall be given him."

I retired to a secret place in a grove, and began to call upon the Lord. While fervently engaged in supplication, my mind was taken away from the objects with which I was surrounded, and I was enrapt in a heavenly vision, and saw two glorious personages, who exactly resembled each other in features and likeness, surrounded with a brilliant light, which eclipsed the sun at noonday. They told me that all the religious denominations were believing in incorrect doctrines, and that none of them was acknowledged of God as His Church and Kingdom. And I was expressly commanded to "go not after them," at the same time receiving a promise that the fullness of the gospel should at some future time be made known unto me.

This First Vision excerpt is, not surprisingly, much closer to the official version than Smith's earlier reports. However, on one key point Smith was again silent: neither God nor Jesus Christ was acknowledged as being present. It is absolutely amazing that Joseph would have neglected to mention the presence of two deities in this remarkable vision, if in fact they were present. Anyone reading this account would have no reason to believe that the two individuals were God and Christ. In fact, the messengers referred to "God" in the third person, which indicates that he was not present. With an opportunity to enlighten the world, Joseph

chose to omit what is now considered the key ingredient, and most incredible part of his vision. Is it possible that he no longer wanted to claim having spoken with deity?

Another damaging statement from Joseph Smith about his vision is the one printed in the *Deseret News* in 1852:

16). *Deseret News*, vol. 2, no.15, May 29, 1852

(*Kirtland*, dated Nov. 14, 1835)

This afternoon, Erastus Holmes, of Newbury, Ohio, called on me to inquire about the establishment of the church, and to be instructed in doctrine more perfectly. I gave him a brief relation of my experience while in my juvenile years, say from six years old up to the time *I received the first visitation of angels*, which was when I was about fourteen years old; also the revelations that I received afterwards concerning the Book of Mormon, and a short account of the rise and progress of the church up to this date.
[italics added]

In this statement, Joseph related his conversation with Erastus Holmes, and referred to the First Vision as the “first visitation of angels.” It seems an unlikely title for a vision in which God and Jesus appeared. When this was reproduced in the *HOTC*, it was subsequently changed to read “first vision”:

17). *History of the Church: Volume II*, p. 312

(*Kirtland*, dated Nov. 14, 1835)

This afternoon, Erastus Holmes, of Newbury, Ohio, called on me to inquire about the establishment of the Church, and to be instructed in doctrine more perfectly. I gave him a brief relation of my experience while in my juvenile years, say from six years old up to the time *I received my first vision*, which was when I was about fourteen years old; also the revelations that I received afterwards concerning the Book of Mormon, and a short account of the rise and progress of the Church up to this date.
[italics added]

This is a significant change, because it avoids a contradiction with the official version. It is revealing to note that the original does not contradict the First Vision version Joseph told in 1835, which is the same year he made this statement. Again, it is extremely disturbing to find that someone in the Church authorized this change in a historical record, which only could have been designed to make Joseph’s story more plausible.

Until 1971, the two personal accounts had not been released to the public. The Church still does not officially recognize them, although Church historians have admitted that they are authentic. It is doubtful whether the full body of the Church will ever become aware of these different versions, because it would be damaging to Smith’s credibility. Nevertheless, it seems suspicious that the Church refused to release these accounts before 1971. There is no way of knowing whether there are more contradictory accounts, because the Church does not allow public access to many of these records. Additionally, in two cases the Church has sanctioned modifications of the record to make Smith’s story more credible. In one case, the modification was corrected at a later date (nearly 100 years later), but the other error has never been corrected.

Regardless of whether there was a “conspiracy” to hide the confusing versions of the First Vision, the fact remains that the official version is one of the last given by Joseph Smith. It was described nearly 18 years after it allegedly took place, and the evidence shows that

Joseph Smith was not aware of the specifics as late as 1835, or as early as 1832. Unless Joseph's memory improved with time, it seems unlikely that the latest account (1838) was the most accurate. However, the earlier accounts, while still amazing, are nothing like the official account. Thus, if these were considered the official account, all members would have to admit that Joseph's vision was not what they had thought, and their "revelation" that it was true would be disproved. Therefore, there is no way for the Church to accept the earlier versions at this point. The 1844 version is vague enough that it could possibly be construed as agreeing with the 1838 version, so this is not technically a problem. However, it still seems odd that Joseph did not claim interaction with deity at that point in time.

It is also clear that the early leaders of the Church must have been acquainted with Joseph's older versions, or something similar. They consistently referred to the messenger as "an angel" or "angels." No doubt they heard Joseph verbally recount his experience, and he spoke of angels rather than God and Christ. At best, the early Church leaders were confused. At worst, they believed the vision was an invention, and simply chose the story that was most familiar to them—the story Joseph originally told, not the dramatized story that added God, Jesus, and a strict prohibition on joining any existing Church. At any rate, it should be obvious that Joseph was not consistent in what he wrote and said. This gave rise to statements from leaders that contradict the official version.

Personally, I feel that the conflicting versions are sufficient evidence to show that Joseph was not telling the truth. Because he was willing to so significantly change and embellish his account, it also seems possible that he invented the story in the first place. Considering that there is no evidence that Joseph was persecuted in his teens for his "vision," and that there are other historical inconsistencies (like the fact that there was no revival in 1820, as he claimed), it seems likely that Joseph simply invented the story many years later. This provided a "Christian" basis for his teachings, and it is probable that he created the story to offset those who criticized him for using a "peep stone" to search for treasure, and other "mystical" involvements.^d

I believe that the evidence given here is sufficient to show that Joseph's story is not as "bullet-proof" as Church leaders would have the members think. In fact, these details appear to fit Joseph Fielding Smith's proof of fraud quite well: "If his claims and declarations were built upon fraud and deceit, there would appear many errors and contradictions, which would be easy to detect." Joseph's First Vision stories *do* contain many errors and contradictions, and they are not difficult to detect. Therefore, based on these criteria, I would conclude that this declaration was built upon "fraud and deceit."

However, Joseph's own words are more powerful in denying the possibility of the official version than any speculation will ever be:

13). D&C 84:19-22

And this greater priesthood administereth the gospel and holdeth the key of the mysteries of the kingdom, even the key of the knowledge of God.

Therefore, in the ordinances thereof, the power of godliness is manifest.

And without the ordinances thereof, and the authority of the priesthood, the power of godliness is not manifest unto men in the flesh;

For without this no man can see the face of God, even the Father, and live.

^d See Quinn, *Early Mormonism and the Magic World View*

In this “revelation,” Joseph taught that no man could see the face of God without the priesthood. Joseph claimed that this was a divinely given revelation. The problem, of course, is that Joseph could not have had the priesthood in 1820 (when he claims the vision took place). The Church had not been restored, and none of Joseph’s heavenly visitors had yet come to restore the priesthood.^e According to verse 22, Joseph would have died if had seen the face of God without the priesthood. Obviously, this is not true, for Joseph lived to tell the story. Therefore, Joseph’s own revelation indicates that the official First Vision was an impossibility.

Admittedly, there is no way of proving that Joseph did or did not have the vision. However, the evidence seems to indicate that it is unlikely that it occurred the way he claimed. The Church has covered up some contradictions, and quite possibly has covered more holes that have not yet come to light. Finally, Joseph Smith’s own revelations do not allow for such an experience. I find it difficult to accept that Joseph ever had any kind of vision, but even if I wanted to believe him, I would not know which experience to believe. Put another way, Smith’s inconsistent testimonies would never hold up in courtroom!

^e *History of the Church*, Volume 1, 39

2). Were Joseph Smith, his apostles, and successors “prophets, seers and revelators”?

Joseph Smith made countless prophecies while he was alive. Most of these prophecies dealt with immediate situations, and typically only made sense in the near future. Some prophecies are vague enough that there will always be a possibility for fulfillment. For example, Joseph frequently said things like, “the hour is nigh, and the day soon at hand.”^f After 160 years, this type of prophecy can technically still be fulfilled; however, when is “soon” no longer accurate: one hundred years, one thousand years, or ten thousand years? The evidence shows that the Mormons believed “soon” would come within their lifetime. In fact, Joseph Smith seems to have believed this, as well. However, there are also several prophecies that can never come to pass, because Joseph was quite specific.

Joseph prophesied the Second Coming on numerous occasions. Often, he used vague wording, but other times he was very specific. The most well known prophecy concerning this event is found in D&C 130:

1). D&C 130:14–17

I was once praying very earnestly to know the time of the coming of the Son of Man, when I heard a voice repeat the following:

Joseph, my son, if thou livest until thou art eighty-five years old, thou shalt see the face of the Son of Man; therefore let this suffice, and trouble me no more on this matter.

I was left thus, without being able to decide whether this coming referred to the beginning of the millennium or to some previous appearing, or whether I should die and thus see his face.

I believe the coming of the Son of Man will not be any sooner than that time.

Joseph received a revelation that he would see the “Son of Man” if he lived to be 85 years old. He admitted that he was unsure of its meaning. In fact, the prophecy appears to be meaningless, because the circumstances never occurred, and God should have been aware that they would not. Why, then, did He give Joseph this information, unless He was giving an upper limit? Joseph stated that he did not believe the Second Coming would occur before this time—he would have been 85 on December 23, 1890. Mormons tend to joke about this prophecy, because they know Joseph never reached age 85, and therefore they see it as the Lord giving Joseph a nebulous answer just to satisfy him.

^f Doctrine and Covenants 29: 9

In 1835, Joseph stated that it was time to “prune the vineyard for the last time,” referring to missionary labors:

2). History of the Church: Volume II, p. 182

(Kirtland, February 14, 1835)

President Smith then stated that the meeting had been called, because God had commanded it; and it was made known to him by vision and by the Holy Spirit. He then gave a relation of some of the circumstances attending us while journeying to Zion—our trials, sufferings: and said God had not designed all this for nothing, but He had it in remembrance yet; and it was the will of God that those who went to Zion, with a determination to lay down their lives, if necessary, should be ordained to the ministry, and go forth to prune the vineyard for the last time, or *the coming of the Lord, which was nigh—even fifty-six years should wind up the scene.* [italics added]

He was quoted as saying that the work was in preparation for the “coming of the Lord, which was nigh,” and that “fifty-six years should wind up the scene.” Although other prophecies are vague, this one seems clear. Joseph Smith said that the Second Coming was “nigh,” and gave 56 years as an upper bound. Apologists like to point out that Joseph used the word “should,” and not “would,” meaning to somehow imply that he was merely guessing at a date.^g I therefore note that *should* is the past tense of *shall* (*will*), and that Joseph was quoted in the past tense. In the *HOTC*, the word *should* is used often in this way. For example, in *HOTC* 1:11, Smith gave this account of his experience with Moroni, “He...said unto me...that my name *should* [would] be had for good and evil among all nations.” This is a particularly compelling example, because Mormons have claimed that this was a prophecy that was fulfilled.^h Perhaps they should reject this prophecy as well, since Moroni used the word *should*.

Therefore, the use of the word *should* does not necessarily diminish the meaning of this statement. Even the alternate definition of *should* would imply that the Second Coming *ought to* have already occurred—why didn’t it? Finally, Smith reportedly called the meeting because of a “vision” and the “Holy Spirit.” Why would he have called such a meeting, only to make guesses about the Second Coming? The evidence again indicates that Joseph Smith placed the Second Coming around 1890.

Admittedly, this statement was made second-hand, and could be inaccurate. But supporting evidence shows that it was probably very accurate. For example, Joseph made another damaging statement to the same effect in 1843:

^g Malin L. Jacobs, *The Alleged Fifty-Six-Year Second-Coming Prophecy of Joseph Smith: An Analysis*. Jacobs stated: “Klaus Hanson ... incorrectly states that Joseph Smith said that fifty-six years *would* wind up the scene. There is a great deal of difference between *should* and *would*. The world of works critical of the LDS faith is littered with such sloppy scholarship.”

^h Clark, *Why I Believe: Fifty-four evidences of the divine mission of the Prophet Joseph Smith*, 39

3). History of the Church: Volume V, p. 336
(Conference, April 6, 1843)

The question has been asked, can a person not belonging to the Church bring a member before the high council for trial? I answer, No. If I had not actually got into this work and been called of God, I would back out. But I cannot back out: I have no doubt of the truth. Were I going to prophesy, I would say the end [of the world] would not come in 1844, 5, or 6, or in forty years. *There are those of the rising generation who shall not taste death till Christ comes.*

I was once praying earnestly upon this subject, and a voice said unto me, "My son, if thou livest until thou art eighty-five years of age, thou shalt see the face of the Son of Man." I was left to draw my own conclusions concerning this; and I took the liberty to conclude that if I did live to that time, He would make His appearance. But I do not say whether He will make his appearance or I shall go where He is. I prophesy in the name of the Lord God, and let it be written—the Son of Man will not come in the clouds of heaven till I am eighty-five years old, **48 years hence or about 1890**. Then read the 14th chapter of Revelation, 6th and 7th verses—"And I saw another angel fly in the midst of heaven, having the everlasting gospel to preach unto them that dwell on the earth, and to every nation, and kindred, and tongue, and people, saying with a loud voice, Fear God and give glory to Him, for the hour of His judgment is come." And Hosea, 6th chapter, After two days, etc.,—2,520 years; which brings it to 1890. The coming of the Son of Man never will be—never can be till the judgments spoken of for this hour are poured out: which judgments are commenced. Paul says, "Ye are the children of the light, and not of the darkness, that that day should overtake you as a thief in the night." It is not the design of the Almighty to come upon the earth and crush it and grind it to powder, but he will reveal it to His servants the prophets. [italics added, text in bold omitted in *HOTC*, but exists in original, J.S. Diary—see *American Prophet's Record*, p. 349]

First, he stated that some of the "rising generation" would not die until the Christ came. The phrase "rising generation" would have to be *very* loosely interpreted if this prophecy is still to be fulfilled. It has been nearly 160 years since he made this statement, and the Church is still waiting for the Second Coming to occur. Additionally, later evidences show that Joseph was referring to the near future.

In the same excerpt (3), Smith again made a statement about his 85th birthday. This time, his phrasing was stronger. In effect, he said that the Lord would not come until 1890, preceding the statement with the words, "I prophesy in the name of the Lord God." Again, never did he explicitly state that the Lord *would* come in 1890. This prophecy is slightly more significant than the one in D&C 130, because he continued with a scriptural and mathematical proof to show that 1890 was the correct date. Finally, Church historians apparently were uncomfortable with the words "48 years hence, or about 1890," because they omitted them (without any indication) when copying the sermon from Joseph's diary (i.e., the words in bold are missing in the official history). It is disrespectful to readers to remove such a significant section of the sentence, and in my opinion this was done in an attempt to hide something. Perhaps this sounded too much like an exact prediction to the historians.

When the twelve apostles were called in 1835, each was giving a blessing. The blessings were recorded in the *HOTC*, and show clearly that Second Coming was not far off:

4). History of the Church: Volume II, p. 187-191
(February 14, 1835)

The blessing of Lyman E. Johnson was, in the name of Jesus Christ, that he should bear the tidings of salvation to nations, tongues, and people, until the utmost corners of the earth shall hear the tidings; and that he shall be a witness of the things of God to nations and tongues, and that holy angels shall administer to him occasionally; and that no power of the enemy shall prevent him from going forth and doing the work of the Lord; and that *he shall live until the gathering is accomplished*, according to the holy prophets; and he shall be like unto Enoch; and his faith shall be like unto his; and he shall be called great among all the living; and Satan shall tremble before him; and *he shall see the Savior come and stand upon the earth* with power and great glory.

...

Heber C. Kimball's blessing was, in substance, that he shall be made like unto those who have been blessed before him; and be favored with the same blessing. That he might receive visions; the ministration of angels, and hear their voice; and even come into the presence of God; that many millions may be converted by his instrumentality; that angels may waft him from place to place, and *that he may stand unto the coming of our Lord*, and receive a crown in the Kingdom of our God; that he be made acquainted with the day when Christ shall come; that he shall be made perfect in faith; and that the deaf shall hear, the lame shall walk, the blind shall see, and greater things than these shall he do; that he shall have boldness of speech before the nations, and great power.

...

David W. Patten's blessing:—O God, give this Thy servant, a knowledge of Thy will; may he be like one of old, who bore testimony of Jesus; may he be a new man from this day forth. He shall be equal with his brethren, the Twelve, and have the qualifications of the prophets before him. May his body be strong and never be weary; may he walk and not faint. May he have power over all diseases, and faith according to his desires; may the heavens be opened upon him speedily: that he may bear testimony from knowledge; that he may go to nations and isles afar off. May he have a knowledge of the things of the Kingdom, from the beginning, and be able to tear down priestcraft like a lion. May he have power to smite his enemies before him, with utter destruction. *May he continue till the Lord comes.* O Father, we seal these blessings upon him. Even so. Amen.

...

William E. M'Lellin's Blessing:—In the name of the Lord, wisdom and intelligence shall be poured out upon him, to enable him to perform the great work that is incumbent upon him: that he may be spared until the Saints are gathered; that he may stand before kings and rulers to bear testimony, and be upheld by holy angels; and the nations of the earth shall acknowledge that God has sent him; he shall have power to overcome his enemies; and his life shall be spared in the midst of pestilence and destruction, and in the midst of his enemies. He shall be a prince and savior to God's people. The tempter shall not overcome him, nor his enemies prevail against him; the heavens shall be opened unto him, as unto men in days of old. He shall be mighty in the hands of God, and shall convince thousands that God has sent him; and *his days may be prolonged until the coming of the Son of Man*. He shall be wafted as on eagles' wings, from country to country, and from people to people; and be able to do wonders in the midst of this generation. Even so. Amen. [italics added]

William Smith's Blessing:—We pray that he may be purified in heart; that he may have communion with God; that he may be equal with his brethren in holding the keys of this ministry; that he may be kept and be instrumental in leading Israel forth, that he may be delivered from the hands of those who seek to destroy him; that he may be enabled to bear testimony to the nations that Jesus lives; that he may stand in the midst of pestilence and destruction. He shall be mighty in the hands of God, in bringing about the restoration of Israel. The nations shall rejoice at the greatness of the gifts which God has bestowed upon him: that his tongue shall be loosed; he shall have power to do great things in the name of Jesus. *He shall be preserved and remain on the earth, until Christ shall come to take vengeance on the wicked.* Adjourned.

For example, in Lyman Johnson's blessing, it was stated, "he shall live until the gathering is accomplished... he shall see the Savior come and stand upon the earth..." Heber C. Kimball was blessed to "stand unto the coming of [the] Lord." David Patten was blessed to "continue until the Lord comes." William McLellin was given a blessing that "his days may be prolonged until the coming of the Son of Man." About William Smith, it was said, "He shall be preserved and remain on the earth, until Christ shall come to take vengeance on the wicked."

Obviously, none of these blessings were fulfilled. David Patten, in particular, died much too soon to see his promise come to pass (for the same reason, he was unable to fulfill section 114 of the *D&C*). The rest of the twelve who received similar promises all died before the Second Coming. Unless the blessings given to the twelve apostles were not inspired, the "Spirit" consistently revealed something that contradicts religious history: the Second Coming has not yet occurred. When added to the fact that Joseph Smith said the Lord would come sometime around 1890, it seems fair to accuse him of false prophecy. Only one part of Joseph's prophecies held true: the Second Coming was not before 1890. However, within a century of this date it still had not occurred, making even this statement relatively useless. As for his prophecy that some of the "rising generation" would not die before Christ's coming, and the several blessings to the same effect, Joseph was simply mistaken. It is ironic that Joseph tried to prophesy the event about which Christ stated, "But of that day and hour knoweth no man, no, not the angels of heaven, but my Father only" (Matt. 24:36).

In 1838, Parley P. Pratt authored a pamphlet titled *Mormonism Unveiled* where he defended the Church and attacked other publications that criticized the Church. In the following quote from that pamphlet, he made a very bold statement, which appears to relate to the Second Coming:

5). Parley P. Pratt

(*Mormonism Unveiled*, Parley Pratt, p. 15)

Now, Mr. Sunderland, you have something definite and tangible, the time, the manner, the means, the names, the dates; and I will state as a prophesy, that there will not be an unbelieving Gentile upon this continent 50 years hence; and if they are not greatly scourged, and in a great measure overthrown, within five or ten years from this date, then the Book of Mormon will have proved itself false.

He daringly prophesied that within 50 years, there would be no unbelievers in North America. Additionally, he stated that if the Gentiles were not overthrown within 10 years, the *Book of Mormon* was false! According to one source, this pamphlet was reproduced in *Writings of Parley P. Pratt*, but this obviously false prophecy was "deleted without any indication."ⁱ At

ⁱ Tanner, *Changing World of Mormonism*, 420

this point, it certainly is not surprising to find that the Church again censored a devastating prophecy to avoid embarrassment. Since Pratt was an apostle at this time, he was also a “prophet, seer and revelator” and his prophecy should have been valid. By his claim, the *Book of Mormon* has been proven false.

The next interesting prophecy relates to the “United Order,” also referred to by Mormons as the “Law of Consecration.” The essence of this doctrine was that all property would be given to the Church, which would mete it out fairly to the members (it has been compared to communism, but differs most notably in that it is operated by “revelation”).

In D&C 104:1-2 (6), the Lord commanded that a “united order” be instated:

6). D&C 104:1-2

VERILY I say unto you, my friends, I give unto you counsel, and a commandment, concerning all the properties which belong to the order which I commanded to be organized and established, to be a united order, and an everlasting order for the benefit of my church, and for the salvation of men until I come—

With promise immutable and unchangeable, that inasmuch as those whom I commanded were faithful they should be blessed with a multiplicity of blessings;

The “everlasting order” was to be for “the salvation of men” until Christ’s coming. However, it is well known that the “united order” failed several times. Today, the common explanation is that the saints were not spiritually ready to practice this, which is probably true. However, it fails to explain why the Lord said it was to be followed until he came. This simply is not the case; now the Church seems to think it will only be possible to follow *when* Christ comes. Joseph Smith was incorrect in his prediction again.

In 1878, after the Church attempted to reinstate the United Order in Utah, John Taylor announced that any who failed to live the United Order would have their names “blotted out.”^j After this statement, the United Order (predictably) failed again. The majority of the Church must have failed to live the law correctly, or else it would not have failed (unless it were a flawed principle). But, the majority of the Church was not excommunicated, as Taylor claimed. This is less of a false prophecy, and more of an idle threat, but it should be no surprise that the Church no longer attempts to enforce the United Order.

^j *Journal of Discourses*, Volume 21, 58

D&C 111 was given in Salem, Massachusetts. The Lord made some interesting promises to Joseph and his companions:

7). D&C 111:1-5

I, the Lord your God, am not displeased with your coming this journey, notwithstanding your follies.

I have much treasure in this city for you, for the benefit of Zion, and many people in this city, whom I will gather out in due time for the benefit of Zion, through your instrumentality.

Therefore, it is expedient that you should form acquaintance with men in this city, as you shall be led, and as it shall be given you.

And it shall come to pass in due time that I will give this city into your hands, that you shall have power over it, insomuch that they shall not discover your secret parts; and its wealth pertaining to gold and silver shall be yours.

Concern not yourselves about your debts, for I will give you power to pay them.

The Lord revealed to Joseph and others that he had “much treasure” for them in the city. They were told that the city would be delivered into their hands, and that they would receive its wealth in the form of silver and gold. This, of course, never happened figuratively or literally. As verse five indicates, they were heavily in debt, and were in Salem searching for a way to obtain the money; the Lord promised them that they would receive the power to do so. Again, this never came to pass, in Salem, or any other place. Six years later, Smith would file bankruptcy, listing his debts at \$73,066.³⁸ When he was martyred, he still owed over \$70,000, a huge sum at that time.^k Therefore, D&C 111 does not appear to be a true prophecy in any way.

In this next revelation, the Lord indicated that a temple would be built in Missouri:

8). D&C 84:3-4

Which city shall be built, beginning at the temple lot, which is appointed by the finger of the Lord, in the western boundaries of the State of Missouri, and dedicated by the hand of Joseph Smith, Jun., and others with whom the Lord was well pleased.

Verily this is the word of the Lord, that the city New Jerusalem shall be built by the gathering of the saints, beginning at this place, even the place of the temple, which temple shall be reared in this generation.

More importantly, the temple was to be built “in this generation.” Unless a generation is nearly 170 years long or longer, this prophecy has failed miserably. Obviously, Joseph Smith was not referring to the distant future, because he wanted to begin the temple immediately. It is unlikely that a Mormon temple will ever be built in the specified area (the RLDS Church owns most of the land, and has already built a “temple” on it), but even if it were, it would be far too late to satisfy this prophecy. Again, Joseph Smith’s words were inaccurate; at best, they were a bad guess.

^k Newell & Avery, *Mormon Enigma*, 200

In 1843, Joseph Smith allegedly had a conversation with Stephen A. Douglas, in which he prophesied the overthrow of the government, unless the wrongs against the Saints were “redressed”:

9). History of the Church: Volume V, p. 392

(under date of May 18, 1843, also in *Desert News*, Sept. 24, 1856)

[The following brief account of the prophet's visit with Judge Douglas while at Carthage is from the journal of William Clayton, who was present:]

The Great Prophecy on the Head of Stephen A. Douglas.

President Smith, in concluding his remarks, said that if the government, which received into its coffers the money of citizens for its public lands, while its officials are rolling in luxury at the expense of its public treasury, cannot protect such citizens in their lives and property, it is an old granny anyhow; and I prophesy in the name of the Lord God of Israel, unless the United States redress the wrongs committed upon the Saints in the state of Missouri and punish the crimes committed by her officers that in a few years the government will be utterly overthrown and wasted, and there will not be so much as a potsherd left, for their wickedness in permitting the murder of men, women and children, and the wholesale plunder and extermination of thousands of her citizens to go unpunished, thereby perpetrating a foul and corroding blot upon the fair fame of this great republic, the very thought of which would have caused the high-minded and patriotic framers of the Constitution of the United States to hide their faces with shame. Judge, you will aspire to the presidency of the United States; and if ever you turn your hand against me or the Latter-day Saints, you will feel the weight of the hand of Almighty upon you; and you will live to see and know that I have testified the truth to you; for the conversation of this day will stick to you through life.

He [Judge Douglas] appeared very friendly, and acknowledged the truth and propriety of President Smith's remarks.

He predicted that the government would be “utterly overthrown and wasted so that there will not be a potsherd left.” A potsherd is a fragment of pottery; therefore, to say that “not even a potsherd” would remain implies total destruction. As we know, the United States government remains standing to this day, but the crimes perpetrated against the Saints were never remedied. Therefore, this is a false prophecy.

The second part of the conversation with Judge Douglas contains a remarkable prophecy that was fulfilled. Joseph Smith allegedly told Stephen Douglas that he would aspire to the Presidency, and would “feel the weight of hand of the Almighty” if he turned against the Mormons. In *Comprehensive History of the Church*, B. H. Roberts pointed out that this prophecy was first published in September of 1856, that Douglas made a verbal attack on the Mormons in June of 1857, and that he went on to lose the election in 1860. Roberts stated further that the Mormons were interested in his comments, because they hoped Douglas would destroy the rumors made about the LDS Church.

This prophecy appears incredibly accurate and prophetic. It seems that Joseph had all the major details correct. First, he predicted that the judge would run for President, which he did. Then, he warned Douglas, implying that he would lose if he turned against the Mormons. Douglas (a friend of Joseph Smith), did turn against the Mormons before his 1860 campaign, and was defeated. All of these things were supposedly written in 1843, making them even more amazing. However, there are some significant problems with the prophecy.

The first thing to note is that the prophecy was reportedly taken from the “journal of William Clayton, who was present.” In searching the diaries of William Clayton, which have

since been published, I found it very difficult to find this entry. Eventually, I did find it, but it was practically unrecognizable. The entry was under the same date of May 18, 1843, but it contained less than twenty percent of what was recorded in the *Deseret News*, or the *HOTC* (which was clearly taken from the *Deseret News*):

10). William Clayton Diary

(May 18, 1843)

Nauvoo 2

At Carthage we paid some taxes &c. Dined at Backenstos's with Judge Douglas who is presiding at Court. After dinner the Prest. & Judge had conversation concerning sundry matters.

Nauvoo 2; Allen 2, p. 118

The Prest. said "I prophecy in the name of the Lord God that in a few years this government will be utterly overthrown and wasted so that there will not be a potsherd left" for their wickedness in conniving at the Missouri mobocracy. The Judge appears very friendly & acknowledged the propriety of the prests. remarks.

The most notable differences are that the prophecy about the overthrow of the government was embellished heavily in the *HOTC*, and that the prophecy about Douglas did not exist at all. In fact, nowhere in William Clayton's Diaries has any such entry been made. Therefore, it is extremely unlikely that this was Joseph's prophecy. This information is enough to dismiss the prophecy as a proof of Joseph Smith. Additionally, the significance of the prophecy is lessened when one learns that it was first published in 1856 (with no evidence that it existed at all before that time). Also, Douglas had lost the Democratic primary in 1852 and 1856, and planned to run again in 1860. Much of the prophecy is therefore invalidated, because whoever had it printed in 1856 would have known that Douglas would "aspire" to the Presidency, and fail (he already had, twice). However, the prophecy has additional problems.

Douglas made a speech that Roberts cited as evidence the Douglas "turned against" the Mormons. Before Douglas' speech, there had been rumors about certain things that were happening in Utah. Douglas listed the rumors, and proposed solutions to investigating the rumors, and dealing with them, if true. When quoting Douglas, Roberts only listed the first two of the three allegations for which Douglas was suggesting possible remedies.¹ Here is the relevant text of the speech:

¹ Roberts, *Comprehensive History of the Church*, 176

11). New York Times, June 23, 1857

(Stephen A. Douglas speech given in June 12, 1857)

These rumors and reports would seem to justify the belief that the following facts are susceptible of proof.

1. That nine-tenths of the inhabitants are aliens by birth who have refused to become naturalized, or take the oath of allegiance, or do any other act recognizing the government of the United States as the paramount authority of the territory of Utah.

2. That the inhabitants, whether native or alien born, known as 'Mormons' (and they constitute the whole people of the territory) are bound by horrible oaths and terrible penalties to recognize and maintain the authority of Brigham Young, and the government of which he is the head, as paramount to that of the United States, in civil as well as in religious affairs; and they will in due time, and under the direction of their leaders, use all means in their power to subvert the government of the United States, and resist its authority."

3. That the Mormon government, with Brigham Young at its head, is now forming alliance with Indian tribes in Utah and adjoining territories—stimulating the Indians to acts of hostility—and organizing bands of his own followers under the name of "Danites, or Destroying Angels," to prosecute a system of robbery and murders upon American citizens, who support the authority of the United States, and denounce the infamous and disgusting practices and institutions of the Mormon Government.

If, upon a full investigation, these representations shall prove true, they will establish the fact that the Mormon inhabitants of Utah, as a community are outlaws and alien enemies, unfit to exercise the right of self-government...and unworthy to be admitted into the Union....

Under the view of this subject, I think it is the duty of the President...to remove Brigham Young ... and to cause a thorough and searching investigation into all the crimes ... which are alleged to be perpetrated....

When the authentic evidence shall arrive, if it shall establish the facts which are believed to exist, it will become the duty of Congress to apply the knife and cut out this loathsome, disgusting ulcer.

Although the text here does reveal some strong wording, it would be inaccurate to term Douglas' speech as an attack on the Mormons. A careful reading of his speech will reveal statements such as "alleged to be perpetrated," and "if [the evidence] shall establish the facts," and "if ... these representations shall prove to be true." When Roberts quoted the speech, he carefully selected the parts with the strongest wording. However, he failed to mention that these statements were based on evidence of the Mormons' guilt. This makes Douglas' statements appear to have less merit. Roberts' decision to include only the first two accusations is also a little suspicious, since the third accusation is the most loathsome of them all! I think even Mormons today would agree with Douglas—action was merited, if indeed the rumors about the Danites were correct.

It was a little insulting to refer to the Mormons as a "loathsome, disgusting ulcer." However, I believe that this description was meant to refer to the hypothetical people that were rumored to exist, including the Danites who were supposedly murdering enemies of Brigham Young. Obviously, Douglas was only suggesting action if the rumors were substantiated. Roberts went on further to say that Douglas should have spoken in defense of the Mormons:

12). Comprehensive History of the Church

(B. H. Roberts, p. 176-177)

I shall so far anticipate historical events, which, if a chronological order were strictly followed, would belong to a later period of our narrative, as to say that the speech of Mr. Douglas was of great interest and importance to the people of Utah at the time it was made. Mr. Douglas had it in his power to do them a great service because of his personal acquaintance with Joseph Smith and the great body of the "Mormon" people in Utah, as well as their leaders; for he had known both leaders and people in Illinois, and those whom he had known in Illinois constituted the great bulk of the people in Utah when he delivered his Springfield speech. He knew that the reports carried to the east by vicious and corrupt men were not true.

Roberts' suggestion that the Mormons expected Douglas to support them in 1857 is not completely accurate. Although Douglas had been helpful to the Mormons on several occasions during the life of Joseph Smith, statements from Church leaders show that they did not always find him so. George Albert Smith stated that Douglas had been among those to reject the *Constitution of Deseret* in 1856 (written in March, 1856), and even accused him of being under the influence of priestcraft:

13). Journal of Discourses, Volume 9, p. 263, George Albert Smith, April 8, 1862

I went to Washington with Elder John Taylor in 1856; we were the bearers of the Constitution of Deseret, adopted by the unanimous vote of the whole people, and a memorial to the great men of the nation for the admission of Deseret into the union of States upon an equal footing with the original States.

...

But, said Congressmen, there is an objection, and although we ought not to name it, the religious views of your people are objectionable to the great body of the American people—Constitutionally this is no objection, but politically it is an impassable barrier. For any member to vote for the admission of Deseret, or advocate it would entail upon himself, what we all dread, a political grave. "You must know, yourselves, you cannot help but know," said Senator Douglas, "that there is an awful prejudice against you—ahem! ahem! an insurmountable objection. We have no right to talk of religious tests or institutions—ahem! ahem! but I know of but one objection; your peculiar religion, your domestic institutions!"

Well might Congressmen use interjections while trembling between the influence of priestcraft, and a solemn oath to support the Constitution of the United States, and faithfully perform those duties required by it.

Later, he implied that he knew Douglas was not a friend to the Mormons before his speech in 1857:

14). Journal of Discourses, Volume 5, pp. 225-226, George Albert Smith, Sept. 13, 1857

When I was back in Washington last season, I had a long conversation with Senator Douglas; and he is a kind of personification of modern democracy-very thick, but not very long. He asked a great many questions about our Temple, and I gave him a description of the foundation, and he asked me if I expected we would ever be able to accomplish it? The manner he communicated it was to show that he had his eye upon another thing than that which he alluded to; but I realised then just as well as I did when I read his proposition to "cut out the loathsome ulcer." I said to him, "O Judge, we are not a little handful, as we were in Nauvoo: we can now do anything we have a mind to."

John Taylor claimed that Judge Douglas had supported revoking the Nauvoo Charter, and had even claimed they "had a right to do it":

15). Journal of Discourses, Volume 5, p. 152, John Taylor, August 23, 1857

Judge Douglas, General Harding, Major Warren, and some of the prominent men from Springfield met together in my house in Nauvoo, and these men could go to work and talk deliberately (and there was no less than two United States' Senators among them at the time,) about removing thousands of people, and letting them be disfranchised and despoiled, as coolly as they would cut up a leg of mutton.

[Voice: "And you told them of it."]

Yes, I did.

Now, then, whom did we injure? What law did we break? Whose rights did we trample upon? Did we dispossess anybody of his land, rob anybody, interfere with anybody's rights? Did we transgress any estate's law, national law, or any other law? We did not; and they never have been able to prove one item against us, and we stand clear. We maintained the law and tried to make it honourable.

What must we go away for? Why, they had murdered our Prophet and Patriarch under the sacred pledge of the Governor of the State and of his officers, all combined, and we could obtain no redress; and because they had done one injury, they must heap a thousand on the back of it.

That is the only reason I know of. They were murderers, and sanctioned the practice, and those men have got to atone for these wrongs yet. [Voices: "Amen."]
The debt has got to be paid.

[Voice: "Douglas is not a bit better than the rest of them."]

Not a particle.

Taylor also accused Douglas of conspiring to disenfranchise the Nauvoo Saints:

16). Journal of Discourses, Volume 5, p. 151, John Taylor, August 23, 1857

We staid in Illinois, lived there as peaceable citizens, and had a city charter, and under its protection improved our city, and had in a short time, by our energy, industry, and enterprize, built one of the best cities in the western country, and had one of the most peaceable societies that existed anywhere, without exception.

The first thing they did to aggravate us was to rob us of our city charter; and this very Judge Douglas, of whom we have heard so much as being our friend, was one of the first movers for its repeal. The first time I ever met with him was in an hotel in Springfield, Illinois, the time they were trying Joseph Smith before Judge Pope. He told me then that they had a right to do it, and that the Judges had decided so. I said, I did not know anything about the Judges.

These things, all of which happened before the printing of the prophecy, could easily be termed “turning [his] hand against” the Mormons. Even more damning to the prophecy is the fact that Douglas had lost the primary long before September of 1856 (Buchanan won on June 5).^m Therefore, in the minds of Mormons, this prophecy had already been fulfilled. Douglas deserted the Mormons, aspired to the presidency, and lost, all before the prophecy was printed in the *Deseret News*. With this information, it would have been trivial for Church Leaders to falsely claim that Joseph had made a prophecy to the same effect in 1843.

Although Douglas was a friend of Joseph Smith during the early years of the Church, there is no reason to assume he was on intimate terms with Brigham Young. Additionally, he had little direct contact with the Church after the migration to Utah. Finally, since the assumption of power by Brigham Young, significant doctrines and policies had emerged, of which Douglas might previously have been unaware. Therefore, to state that Douglas was expected to vindicate the Church is a weak argument. If he had done so, it would have required him to make dangerous assumptions. The three accusations that he listed were serious, and all of them more recent than his involvement with Joseph Smith. Thus, he did his duty by stating that the accusations needed to be investigated; he could not have honestly assured anyone that they were false. As it would later turn out, evidence would show that the Danites were a very real organization, whose mission was to destroy the enemies of the Church.ⁿ

Later, B.H. Roberts would suggest that the prophecy was fulfilled by Douglas’ loss (and subsequent death) in 1860.^o He ignored what must have been obvious to him: events fitting the description of the prophecy had already occurred when it was written. The problems with Roberts’ analysis are many. First, the statement was *not* taken from the journal of William Clayton, as he claimed. Second, the words of the prophecy were fulfilled through events that preceded its printing by less than six months. Third, his quoting of the speech of September of 1857 as the fulfillment of the “turning [his] hand against” the Mormons is a misrepresentation. Douglas did not turn against the Mormons in 1857; he simply recommended an investigation, and punishment, if merited. Fourth, his statement that the Utahans hoped for support from Douglas in 1857 must be false; he had already declined to support their constitution, and he would have had no basis for dismissing the claims made about Brigham Young.

^m *New York Times*, June 5, 1856

ⁿ Faulring, *American Prophet's Record*, 198 & Bill Hickman, *Brigham's Destroying Angel*

^o Roberts, *Comprehensive History of the Church*, 177

This prophecy is bad for the Mormon Church on three points. One, it is most likely a falsification by someone after the time of Joseph Smith, meaning that Church Leaders quoted Joseph as making prophecies he did not. Two, it was printed (and probably created) after it had already been fulfilled; when coupled with the previous accusation, this implies a need for the Church to dishonestly perpetuate myths to gain the faith of its members. Three, the prophecy can no longer be used as an “evidence” of the prophet Joseph (because there is no valid record of it occurring during his lifetime), it being one of the few significant prophecies that qualified in the first place.

The next prophecy is amusing, both because it failed to come to pass, and because of the audacity of the speaker:

17). Journal of Discourses, Volume V, p. 219
(Heber C. Kimball)

Well, I have no feelings in me against any one—not against brother Marsh; but I feel to bless him with the blessings of God, with the blessings of the earth, from the crown of your head to the soles of your feet; for this is my calling, and I do not feel to curse. But as for our enemies, they have cursed themselves with all the curses they can bear; and the cursings that are on them they never can get off, neither can those who sustain them. The Church and kingdom to which we belong will become the kingdom of our God and his Christ, and brother Brigham Young will become President of the United States.

[Voices responded, "Amen."]

And I tell you he will be something more; but we do not now want to give him the name: but he is called and ordained to a far greater station than that, and he is foreordained to take that station, and he has got it; and I am Vice-President, and brother Wells is the Secretary of the Interior—yes, and of all the armies in the flesh.

You don't believe that; but I can tell you it is one of the smallest things that I can think of. You may think that I am joking; but I am perfectly willing that brother Long should write every word of it; for I can see it, just as naturally as I see the earth and the productions thereof.

Heber C. Kimball stated that Brigham Young would become President of the United States. Further, he named himself as Vice President and Daniel H. Wells as Secretary of the Interior. Heber C. Kimball was an apostle, and therefore entitled to make prophecies. Obviously, this prophecy can never be completed in any reasonable way. All of those mentioned died without fulfilling the prophecy. Kimball's prophecy was merely a ridiculous boast that would never come to pass.

Section 87 of the Doctrine and Covenants contains what I consider the most important prophecy that Joseph Smith ever made:

18). D&C 87 (also see HC 1:301)

VERILY, thus saith the Lord concerning the wars that will shortly come to pass, beginning at the rebellion of South Carolina, which will eventually terminate in the death and misery of many souls;

And the time will come that war will be poured out upon all nations, beginning at this place.

For behold, the Southern States shall be divided against the Northern States, and the Southern States will call on other nations, even the nation of Great Britain, as it is called, and they shall also call upon other nations, in order to defend themselves against other nations; and then war shall be poured out upon all nations.

And it shall come to pass, after many days, slaves shall rise up against their masters, who shall be marshaled and disciplined for war.

And it shall come to pass also that the remnants who are left of the land will marshal themselves, and shall become exceedingly angry, and shall vex the Gentiles with a sore vexation.

And thus, with the sword and by bloodshed the inhabitants of the earth shall mourn; and with famine, and plague, and earthquake, and the thunder of heaven, and the fierce and vivid lightning also, shall the inhabitants of the earth be made to feel the wrath, and indignation, and chastening hand of an Almighty God, until the consumption decreed hath made a full end of all nations;

That the cry of the saints, and of the blood of the saints, shall cease to come up into the ears of the Lord of Sabaoth, from the earth, to be avenged of their enemies.

Wherefore, stand ye in holy places, and be not moved, until the day of the Lord come; for behold, it cometh quickly, saith the Lord. Amen.

This prophecy is not important because it is accurate, but because it is the most frequently used in proving that Smith had the gift of prophecy. It does happen to be accurate on several points. However, it is extremely inaccurate on others. Those who refer to it as proof tend to gloss over important points, which appear to be nothing but dramatizations. The main points that Smith correctly foresaw were the following: there would be a war starting in South Carolina, and they would call upon Great Britain for aid. Before dealing with the parts of the prophecy that did not occur, it is again important to understand the historical setting.

In 1828 and 1832, Congress passed tariffs that increased the cost of certain imported goods by 50% or more. South Carolina was still recovering from the depression of 1819. In 1828, they published the *South Carolina Exposition and Protest* (written secretly by Vice President Calhoun), stating their right to nullify Federal laws. They took no further action, but in 1832, Congress passed another tariff that failed to address their concerns. In November of 1832, a convention was held in South Carolina, and the *South Carolina Ordinance of Nullification* was written:

19). South Carolina Ordinance of Nullification

(November 24, 1832, *Annals of America*, Vol. 5, 574-576)

We, therefore, the people of the state Of South Carolina, in Convention assembled, do declare and ordain, and it is hereby declared and ordained, that the several acts and parts of acts of the Congress of the United States purporting to be laws for the imposing of duties and imposts on the importation of foreign commodities, and now having actual operation and effect within the United States, and more especially an act entitled "An Act in Alteration of the Several Acts Imposing Duties on Imports," approved on the 19th of May, 1828, and also an act entitled "An Act to Alter and Amend the Several Acts Imposing Duties on Imports," approved on the 14th day of July, 1832, are unauthorized by the Constitution of the United States and violate the true meaning and intent thereof, and are null, void, and no law, nor binding upon this state, its officers, or citizens; and all promises, contracts, and obligations made or entered into, or to be made or entered into, with purpose to secure the duties imposed by said acts, and all judicial proceedings which shall be hereafter had in affirmance thereof, are and shall be held utterly null and void.

And it is further ordained that it shall not be lawful for any of the constituted authorities, whether of this state or of the United States, to enforce the payment of duties imposed by the said acts within the limits of this state; but it shall be the duty of the legislature to adopt such measures and pass such acts as may be necessary to give full effect to this ordinance, and to prevent the enforcement and arrest the operation of the said acts and parts of acts of the Congress of the United States, within the limits of this state, from and after the 1st day of February next; and the duty of all other constituted authorities, and of all persons residing or being within the limits of this state, and they are hereby required and enjoined to obey and give effect to this ordinance, and such acts and measures of the legislature as may be passed or adopted in obedience thereto.

...

And we, the people of South Carolina, to the end that it may be fully understood by the government of the United States and the people of the co-states, that *we are determined to maintain this, our ordinance and declaration, at every hazard, do further declare, that we will not submit to the application of force on the part of the federal government to reduce this state to obedience; but that we will consider the passage by Congress of any act authorizing the employment of a military or naval force against the state of South Carolina, her constituted authorities or citizens, or any act abolishing or closing the ports of this state, or any of them, or otherwise obstructing the free ingress and egress of vessels to and from the said ports, or any other act on the part of the federal government to coerce the state, shut up her ports, destroy or harass her commerce, or to enforce the acts hereby declared to be null and void, otherwise than through the civil tribunals of the country, as inconsistent with the longer continuance of South Carolina in the Union.* [italics added]

They stated that the tariffs of 1828 and 1832 were "null, void, and no law, nor binding upon this state." Additionally, they stated, "we will not submit to the application of force on the part of the federal government to reduce this state to obedience." They concluded by emphasizing their right to leave the Union if the government retaliated in any way. At the same convention, a speech was given which stated, among other things, "this system of oppression shall never prevail in South Carolina, until none but slaves are left to submit to it":

20). South Carolina Speech on Tariffs and Succession

(November 24, South Carolina Convention of 1832)

If South Carolina should be driven out of the Union, all the other planting States, and some of the Western States, would follow by an almost absolute necessity. Can it be believed that [the southern states] would continue to pay a tribute of fifty per cent, upon their consumptions, to the Northern States, for the privilege of being united to them, when they could receive all their supplies through the ports of South Carolina, without paying a single cent of tribute?

The separation of South Carolina would inevitably produce a general dissolution of the Union; and as a necessary consequence, the protecting system, with all its pecuniary bounties to the Northern States, and its pecuniary burthens [sic] upon the Southern States, would be utterly overthrown and demolished, involving the ruin of thousands and hundreds of thousands in the manufacturing States.

...

We have not the slightest apprehension that the General Government will attempt to force this system upon us by military power. We have warned our brethren of the consequences of such an attempt. But if, notwithstanding, such a course of madness should be pursued, we here solemnly declare, that *this system of oppression shall never prevail in South Carolina, until none but slaves are left to submit to it. We would infinitely prefer that the territory of the State should be a cemetery of freemen, than the habitation of slaves.* Actuated by these principles, and animated by these sentiments, we will cling to the pillars of the temple of our liberties, and *if it must fall, we will perish amidst the ruins.* [italics added]

It is clear that South Carolina refused to comply with the law passed by Congress, and was willing to fight to the death if force had been applied. According to this speech (although probably exaggerated), the citizens were ready to give their lives before accepting the terms of the Union.

Andrew Jackson was not particularly receptive to the claims of South Carolina:

21). Andrew Jackson: Proclamation to the People of South Carolina

(December 10, 1832, *Annals of America*, Vol. 5, 585-592)

I consider, then, the power to annul a law of the United States, assumed by one state, incompatible with the existence of the Union, contradicted expressly by the letter of the Constitution, unauthorized by its spirit, inconsistent with every principle on which it was founded, and destructive of the great object for which it was formed.

...

The Constitution of the United States, then, forms a government, not a league; and whether it be formed by compact between the states or in any other manner, its character is the same. It is a government in which all the people are represented, which operates directly on the people individually, not upon the states; they retained all the power they did not grant. But each state, having expressly parted with so many powers as to constitute, jointly with the other states, a single nation, cannot, from that period, possess any right to secede, because such secession does not break a league but destroys the unity of a nation; and any injury to that unity is not only a breach which would result from the contravention of a compact but it is an offense against the whole Union.

To say that any state may at pleasure secede from the Union is to say that the United States are not a nation, because it would be a solecism to contend that any part of a nation might dissolve its connection with the other parts, to their injury or ruin, without committing any offense. Secession, like any other revolutionary act, may be morally justified by the extremity of oppression; but to call it a constitutional right is

confounding the meaning of terms, and can only be done through gross error or to deceive those who are willing to assert a right, but would pause before they made a revolution or incur the penalties consequent on a failure.

...

Disunion by armed force is treason. Are you really ready to incur its guilt? If you are, on the heads of the instigators of the act be the dreadful consequences; on their heads be the dishonor, but on yours may fall the punishment. *On your unhappy state will inevitably fall all the evils of the conflict you force upon the government of your country.* It cannot accede to the mad project of disunion, of which you would be the first victims. Its first magistrate cannot, if he would, avoid the performance of his duty. [italics added]

Jackson refused to acknowledge the right of South Carolina to secede. He said, of their attempt to nullify the tariff, "I consider, then, the power to annul a law of the United States, assumed by one state, incompatible with the existence of the Union, contradicted expressly by the letter of the Constitution, ... and destructive of the great object for which it was formed." He finished by issuing a warning to South Carolina and other states who might join: "Disunion by armed force is treason. Are you ready to incur its guilt? ... On your unhappy state will inevitably fall all the evils of the conflict you force upon the government of your country." Prior to this statement, Jackson had sent seven naval vessels and a man-of-war to Charleston, SC with orders to prepare for action. It is easy to see that Jackson was ready to take up armed force against South Carolina, if they chose to defect.

South Carolina, however, refused to submit. On December 20, 1832, they replied to Jackson's Proclamation:

22). South Carolina's Reply to Jackson's Proclamation

(December 20, Committee on Federal Relations, *Annals of America*, Vol. 5, p. 593)

Resolved, that the opinions of the President in regard to the rights of the states are erroneous and dangerous....

...

Resolved, that each state of the Union has the right, whenever it may deem such a course necessary for the preservation of its liberties or vital interests, to secede peacefully from the Union, and that there is no constitutional power in the general government, much less in the Executive Department of that government, to retain by force a such state in the Union.

...

Resolved, that the principles, doctrines, and purposes contained in the said proclamation are ... subversive of the rights of the states ... and if submitted to in silence would lay a broad foundation for the establishment of monarchy.

Resolved, that while this legislature has witnessed with sorrow such a relaxation of the spirit of our institutions that a President of the United States dare venture upon this highhanded measure, it regards with indignation the menaces which are directed against, and the concentration of a standing army on our borders—that the state will repel force by force, and relying on the blessings of God, will maintain its liberty at all hazards.

In this reply, they reasserted their right to secede from the Union, and stated that the constitution gave the government no power to stop them. They also accused Jackson of laying a foundation of monarchy (they were not the first to do this; Jackson's nickname was King Andrew the 1st). Finally, they stated their willingness to "repel force by force."

The result of this correspondence was a high amount of tension in the United States. South Carolina had stated its unwillingness to cooperate, and Andrew Jackson had stated his willingness to enforce the law through military force. Both parties were ready and determined to go to war, if necessary. The fear of calamity pervasive in the Union at the time is evident by an article printed on December 21, 1832 in the *Painesville Telegraph*,^p a newspaper in Ohio:

23). “The Crisis”: Painesville Telegraph, December 21, 1832
(Originally printed in the *New York Courier and Enquirer*)

What is this but nullification? ... The “engendering of strifes” and “dissolving the most endearing relations in life” is not in the climax of its mischiefs—for it aims at once at armed resistance and civil war.

What then is really the present position of our country? Two States out of twenty-four, have put at defiance two of the three branches of the General Government! Georgia has set the example of nullification of the Judiciary, which South Carolina is following in relation to Congress. The latter threatens, what the other has practised. A few months more will test the permanency of our institutions, and decide the problem whether man is capable of self-government;—for in a few months more, unless some signal interposition shall arrest the course of events in both these States, our national existence is at an end, and *Fuit* may be inscribed over the halls of the Capitol.

The article explains that Georgia and South Carolina were aiming “at armed resistance and civil war.” In the closing paragraph, the author made this chilling prediction: “...in a few months more, unless some signal interposition shall arrest the course of events in both these States [Georgia and South Carolina], our national existence is at an end....” Based on these statements, it should be obvious that the author foresaw the possibility of civil war, and destruction of the government.

On February 12, 1833, Henry Clay proposed a bill that alleviated the tensions. It proposed a gradual reduction in tariffs until they reached a low of 20 percent. This was a significant concession to South Carolina, and Calhoun spoke in favor of the bill. The bill passed 119 to 85 in the House, and 29-16 in the Senate. It is a fact of history that Henry Clay’s tariff compromise bill avoided almost certain civil war. It is quite likely that the fear of revolution prompted Congress to change the law according to South Carolina’s request. However, thanks to Clay, a civil war did not break out at this time, but was only postponed until a time when tensions became even greater.

^p The *Painesville Telegraph* was almost certainly well known by Joseph Smith, as it contained several articles about him, Sidney Rigdon, and the *Book of Mormon*, from 1829-1832.

With all of this knowledge, it would have been practically insignificant for Joseph Smith to make his prediction of a war “beginning at the rebellion of South Carolina.” His comments on the matter leave no doubt that Smith was aware of the situation:

24). History of the Church: Volume I, p. 301
(Joseph Smith)

The people of South Carolina, in convention assembled (in November), passed ordinances, declaring their state a free and independent nation; and appointed Thursday, the 31st day of January, 1833, as a day of humiliation and prayer, to implore Almighty God to vouchsafe His blessings, and restore liberty and happiness within their borders. President Jackson issued his proclamation against this rebellion, called out a force sufficient to quell it, and implored the blessings of God to assist the nation to extricate itself from the horrors of the approaching and solemn crisis.

[section 87 of the D&C follows]

Smith’s revelation was given on December 25, 1832. Since he lived in Ohio at the time, he might easily have read the article printed in the *Painesville Telegraph* four days earlier, which suggested that the nation might dissolve in “a few months.” Even more significant, his comments on the issues between Jackson and South Carolina *directly precede* what later became section 87 of the D&C. Thus, in addition to having made this prediction in the historical context of the problems between Andrew Jackson and South Carolina, Joseph used those very events as an introduction to his revelation. To reiterate, during the same sermon (and on the same date), Joseph commented on the tension between President Jackson and the state of South Carolina, and gave his revelation predicting a civil war.

If a war had broken out in 1833, it hardly would have been proof of prophecy. Any reasonable person could have made a similarly accurate guess. The following article in the *Evening and Morning Star* demonstrates that the Mormons were afraid that the events would lead to the end of regular life:

25). Evening and Morning Star, January 1833
(Under the heading *Signs of the Times*)

It is certainly a day of dilemmas: The political party that has just been crowned with victory, shudders at the prospect before it. Horror, with all its fearful gloom slackens in one place, and commotion, or rebellion, with all its crimson warnings, reddens in another, showing, if ever there was a time when the sword of the Lord hung by a single hair, over the heads of them that have seated themselves round the feast table, it is now. The man that undertakes to run FROM the pestilence, runs to danger: and he that would leave Europe because her kingdoms are crumbling to pieces, to come to America, beholds the links in the chain of Freedom break, as the new ropes in the hands of Sampson: and he looks, but looks in vain for peace, for the hour is nigh, when it shall be taken from the earth. In the east there is trouble; in the west there is fear; in the north there is no peace, and in the south there is consternation. Well may we exclaim, all things must change: but virtue shall endure forever.

Since a war did not break out, I believe they and Joseph were mistaken. Mormons like to cite the Civil War as having fulfilled the prophecy, while ignoring the fact that war was imminent (for different reasons) at the time Joseph made the prophecy. Stating that a rebellion would start in South Carolina was moot; South Carolina had already rebelled verbally, and

threatened military action. Therefore, the specifics of the prophecy that Joseph gave already applied in 1832.

Now that it is obvious why Joseph gave the revelation, and that others had similar ideas in 1832, it would be unimpressive (at best) if Joseph's prophecy were fulfilled in any way afterwards. Ironically, Joseph's prophecy was not fulfilled. Again, Mormons enjoy pointing out the few parts that Joseph accurately predicted. But, were these the most significant parts of the prophecy? Was the entire prophecy fulfilled? A careful study reveals that very little of the prophecy was fulfilled. In fact, the only parts that were fulfilled were the parts that already seemed likely in the almost-war of 1833.

The following is a review of the revelation (18) verse by verse.

Verse 1 says that the "the wars ... beginning at rebellion of South Carolina ... will eventually terminate in the death and misery of many souls." This seems to be accurate. One thing seems incorrect, however. As far as I know, only one war began in South Carolina. So, referring to the Civil War as "wars" seems wrong. However, this is a trivial point. In Joseph's assessment of the issues in 1832, he referred to South Carolina's statement of November as a "rebellion." He was probably referring to this "rebellion" in the prophecy as well, but "wars" did not result from the 1832 event, thanks to Henry Clay. He also stated that the wars would "shortly come to pass." Do 27 years qualify as "shortly"?

Verse 2 claims that "war will be poured out upon all nations, beginning at this place." War was not "poured out upon all nations," as Joseph stated. Apologists state that World Wars I & II fulfill this part of the prophecy.⁹ But, World Wars I & II did not begin in South Carolina, meaning they cannot be the fulfillment of the prophecy. This is a major problem if this revelation has already been fulfilled. Additionally, if these were the "wars," then "shortly come to pass" must mean at least 80-110 years.

Verse 3 states some well-known issues. The Southern States were already "divided against" the Northern States in 1832. The tariffs were designed to protect the manufacturing states in the North. The South benefited little from this (their work was in agriculture, not manufacturing), in addition to having to pay 150% of the cost of items that were not yet produced in the States. The North supported the tariffs, and the South did not. Additionally, the issue of slavery had already created a divide between the North and South. If a war had erupted over any issue, it is certain that the South would have been "divided against" the North.

Next, verse 3 states that the South would "call on other nations." Great Britain had an interest in the crops (mostly cotton) that were produced in the South (even in 1832), and was against the high tariffs of 1828, and 1832, because it reduced the amount of manufactured goods they could sell in the South. Thus, in 1832, there was a fairly good possibility that Britain might have helped the South in the almost-war. In 1860, the South did try to involve Great Britain by threatening to withhold cotton exports. The tariffs were no longer an issue. However, this pressure was not enough to prompt Britain to join the war. So, although the South did call upon Great Britain, this was predictable, and Britain did not help them.

Still in verse 3, the statement is made "they shall call upon other nations, in order to defend themselves against other nations...." It is unclear whether this refers again to the South, or to Great Britain. However, in either case it is false. Because Great Britain did not get involved, they had no need to "defend themselves against other nations." Neither did the South need to "defend themselves against other nations," for they were never attacked by another nation. Finally, it claims, "and then war shall be poured out upon all nations." Obviously, this never happened. Even if this could somehow refer to WWI or WWII, even those wars did not

⁹ John A. Tvedtnes, *A Reply to Dick Baer*, 12-14

involve “all nations.” This part of the prophecy is simply wrong. Joseph Smith was predicting a domino effect, but it just did not occur in that way.

In verse 4, it says, “... slaves shall rise up against their masters.” There were several slave rebellions during the Civil War. However, it was not part of the war, but a regular occurrence starting long before the Civil War. In 1792, 1800, 1816, 1822, and twice in 1831 there were significant slave revolts.^r It is also predictable that slaves would revolt during any major war, since distractions would facilitate rebellions.

Also in verse 4, it says that the rebelling slaves “shall be marshaled and disciplined for war.” Predictably, some slaves did fight in the Civil War. It would have been foolish not to use all available manpower. However, the slaves that fought for the North were not slaves that had “risen up against their masters,” but slaves freed (and thus no longer slaves) through the *Emancipation Proclamation*, after which they knew they could find refuge in the North. Additionally, around 65,000 slaves and free blacks fought for the Confederacy! There may have been a few slaves that rebelled, and later fought against the South, but it seems Joseph Smith was predicting a dramatic slave rebellion that never happened. In actuality, the only blacks who still qualified as slaves were fighting for the South, not the North.

In verse 5, Joseph referred to the “remnants,” saying that they would “vex the Gentiles with a sore vexation.” Although I have read that the “remnants” referred to the Native Americans (see D&C 109:65), I am unsure of its meaning here. If it does refer to the Native Americans, the “sore vexation” came from the “Gentiles,” and started much earlier than the Civil War. In any case, it was well known in 1832 that the Indians were a problem for American settlers. The United States has so totally destroyed the Native American lifestyle and population that it is hardly fair to refer to them as a “sore vexation,” on the “Gentiles.”

In verse 6 there are several parts of the prophecy that Joseph could not have predicted from the historical setting. Of great significance is that these elements never were fulfilled. It is fair to say that “the inhabitants of the earth will mourn,” is accurate; this happens in any war. However, that is where the accuracy stops. Did “famine, plague, earthquake, and the thunder of heaven,” occur, any more than usual? He said, “the inhabitants of the earth [shall] be made to feel the wrath, indignation, and chastening hand of an Almighty God.” Did this occur any time during or after the Civil War? Finally, he stated that this would all continue until “the consumption decreed hath made a full end of all nations.” Even if, in some way, any of these things happened as a result of the Civil War, all nations have not ended. Therefore, these things must still be in progress. Again, it appears that Joseph Smith was predicting a domino effect, but it never occurred. Unless all of the events in verse six started as a result of the Civil War, and continued until an “end of all nations,” this must be a false prophecy.

In the last two verses, we can see that Joseph was anticipating that the “wars” were a precursor to the Second Coming. This fits with his predictions that the Second Coming would be in the lifetime of some of the Saints. But, the Civil War did not lead to the Second Coming, or an Armageddon as Joseph seemed to think. Also, has the “blood of the saints” ceased to “come up into the ears of the Lord,” simply because a war was fought? Again, it seems more likely that Joseph was predicting a World War that led up to the Second Coming. On the contrary, no one outside of the United States got involved.

Therefore, there are many, many parts of the revelation that simply did not come to pass. There does not seem to be any reasonable possibility of fulfillment of the events described. Certain events in the revelation did happen. However, all of these make perfect sense based on the historical and political events that had occurred directly before Joseph’s

^r Herbert Aptheker, *American Negro Slave Revolts*

statement. The strongest argument against Joseph's prediction of the Civil War is that he preceded his revelation with a discussion of the "rebellion" of South Carolina in 1832. It just seems unlikely that he was referring to the war that finally started in 1860—he was clearly basing his prediction on the imminent war in December of 1832.

After Joseph gave this revelation, it was not canonized for several years. The Church was possibly embarrassed that Henry Clay had seemingly invalidated Smith's revelation. The revelation was published in England in 1852, when the Civil War seemed quite likely, but it was still not canonized. The revelation was not added to the Book of Commandments in 1833, or the 1835, 1844, 1845 (England), and 1849 (England) editions of the Doctrine and Covenants. In 1876, it was finally added and canonized, *after the Civil War*. At the risk of sounding overtly cynical, I sincerely doubt it would have been added if the Civil War had not occurred.

Another of Joseph's prophecies concerned the Saints coming to the Rocky Mountains:

25). History of the Church: Volume V, p. 85

(Joseph Smith, August 6, 1842)

Passed over the river to Montrose, Iowa, in company with General Adams, Colonel Brewer, and others, and witnessed the installation of the officers of the Rising Sun Lodge Ancient York Masons, at Montrose, by General James Adams, Deputy Grand-Master of Illinois. While the Deputy Grand-Master was engaged in giving the requisite instructions to the Master-elect, I had a conversation with a number of brethren in the shade of the building on the subject of our persecutions in Missouri and the constant annoyance which has followed us since we were driven from that state. I prophesied that the Saints would continue to suffer much affliction and would be driven to the Rocky Mountains, many would apostatize, others would be put to death by our persecutors or lose their lives in consequence of exposure or disease, and some of you will live to go and assist in making settlements and build cities and see the Saints become a mighty people in the midst of the Rocky Mountains.

The prophecy was allegedly given in August of 1842. In fact, it is even found in the original manuscript. There are two problems with the manuscript, however. One, the manuscript is dated after Joseph Smith's death. Thus, it is difficult to know if he actually made the prophecy at all. Two, the "prophetic" part of the prophecy was spuriously added to the manuscript at a later time. The Tanners explain, after viewing the manuscripts, that the prophecy had been added in between the lines in smaller handwriting:

26). Changing World of Mormonism, pp. 405–406
(Jerald & Sandra Tanner)

Just after we wrote this statement the situation changed and we were able to make this statement in the Appendix to the same book: "We are now happy to announce that a photograph of the portion of the original handwritten manuscript containing this 'prophecy' has been located at the Visitor Center in Nauvoo, Illinois. Wesley P. Walters of Marissa, Illinois, has sent us a photograph of this page.... This photograph is taken from 'Joseph Smith's Manuscript History,' Book D-1, page 1362."

An examination of the photograph revealed that the part concerning the Mormons becoming "a mighty people in the midst of the Rocky Mountains" was crammed in between the lines of the text in a much smaller handwriting. This indicated that the famous prophecy had been added to the manuscript sometime after this page had originally been written. When we published an enlarged edition of *Mormonism—Shadow or Reality?* we stated that "Dean C. Jessee's study proves that this prophecy could not have been written in 'Joseph Smith's Manuscript History' until at least a year after Joseph Smith's death. He shows that page 1362 of the Manuscript History—the page containing the prophecy—was not even written until July 4, 1845!"

We reasoned that if the page was not written until July 4, 1845, then it was likely that the interpolation containing the prophecy was not added until after the Mormons came to Utah. We have recently found new evidence which further undermines the authenticity of this prophecy. Fortunately, in 1845 Brigham Young had ordered the scribes to make a "duplicate handwritten copy of the History" (Brigham Young University Studies, Summer 1971, p.469). We examined this second manuscript, Book D-2, p.2, and found that the "Rocky Mountain Prophecy" was written in very small handwriting between the lines. In other words, it was obviously added at a later time to this manuscript.

The situation, then, boils down to the following: we have two handwritten manuscripts, books D-1 and D-2. Neither of these books were even started until *after* Joseph Smith's death. In both cases the prophecy concerning the Mormons coming to the Rocky Mountains was interpolated in a smaller handwriting.

Having this information, it is impossible to accept the statement as Joseph's. It is much more likely that it was added later (after having already occurred) as a "faith promoter" for early Saints. It is also possible that Brigham Young had it added to prove he had come to the "right place."

Joseph is said to have predicted his death at Carthage Jail in section 135:

27). D&C 135:4

When Joseph went to Carthage to deliver himself up to the pretended requirements of the law, two or three days previous to his assassination, he said: "I am going like a lamb to the slaughter; but I am calm as a summer's morning; I have a conscience void of offense towards God, and towards all men. I SHALL DIE INNOCENT, AND IT SHALL YET BE SAID OF ME—HE WAS MURDERED IN COLD BLOOD."—The same morning, after Hyrum had made ready to go—shall it be said to the slaughter? yes, for so it was—he read the following paragraph, near the close of the twelfth chapter of Ether, in the Book of Mormon, and turned down the leaf upon it....

However, the *HOTC* appears to have a more complete recording of what he said:

28). History of the Church: Volume VI, p. 555

Henry G. Sherwood went up to Joseph and said, "Brother Joseph, shall I return to Nauvoo and regulate about getting the arms and get the receipts for them?" Joseph inquired if he was under arrest, or expected to be arrested. Sherwood answered "No," when Joseph directed him to return ahead of the company, gather the arms and do as well as he could in all things. Joseph then said to the company who were with him, "I am going like a lamb to the slaughter, but I am calm as a summer's morning. I have a conscience void of offense toward God and toward all men. If they take my life I shall die an innocent man, and my blood shall cry from the ground for vengeance, and it shall be said of me 'He was murdered in cold blood!'" He then said to Father Sherwood, "Go, and God bless you." Sherwood then rode as swiftly as he could to Nauvoo.

In any case, section 135 was written after Joseph died, so the writer could easily have dishonestly claimed Joseph made the prophecy. However, the quote from *HOTC* shows that it was not really a prophecy at all. He said, "If they take my life, I shall die an innocent man." In the D&C, Joseph is quoted as saying he would die innocent, as if he were making a prediction. No doubt Joseph feared being killed, for the mobs were greatly aroused. Thus, even if it were a prophecy, it would not have been very impressive. But, there is no record of this prophecy that was written before his death. In any case, Joseph's statement would have been false. He did *not* die an innocent man, at least legally. He was guilty of the destruction of the *Nauvoo Expositor* printing house, and the crime of bigamy. Joseph also did not go as "a lamb to the slaughter," but died in a gunfight in which he allegedly killed two men.^s Although Joseph's murder was unwarranted and atrocious, this "prophecy" does not seem to be particularly accurate.

In this section I have covered several prophecies of Joseph Smith that I consider to have failed. I have also covered four prophecies that Mormons claim have come to pass. Although these four *have* come to pass (at least partially), all of them have serious problems. Two of them (the Douglas prophecy and the Rocky Mountain prophecy) do not appear to be authentic at all. The prophecy that Mormons claim foretells the Civil War has several components that simply did not occur. The rest of the prophecy can easily be explained by events in 1832, and Joseph clearly based his "revelation" on those events. Joseph's prophecy of his death was actually a comment to friends (in which he did not appear to be sure he would die), and never recorded until after he died. In all honesty, if these are the most significant prophecies that can be used to "prove" the prophetic gift of Joseph Smith, I have to conclude that there is no real evidence he was a prophet.

Joseph had a habit of making prophecies that should have occurred within days, or months. When events beyond his control and knowledge interrupted these events, and/or prevented them from happening, Joseph's prophecies should have been denounced as false. Instead, Mormons continue to hope that, someday, these events will be fulfilled. When Joseph announced that the "United Order," should be practiced until Christ came, he obviously meant to institute it immediately. He had no vision of a century-long interim in which the practice would be replaced by the inferior law of tithing. But, history told a different story, and although Joseph tried several times to make the "United Order" work, it simply did not. When God commanded Joseph to "form acquaintance" with the people Salem, and promised, "it [the city of Salem] shall be given" to him, it was a prophecy of the near future. Again, history

^s *History of the Church*, Volume 7, 102 (the historical accuracy of this has been challenged, since no record of the two men allegedly killed has been found)

would not support the claim, and Mormons are now forced to guess about what the revelation could mean, and how it can still be fulfilled.

This kind of logic (or lack thereof) is simply amazing. Instead of viewing Joseph's prophecies objectively, the LDS Church must theorize about obscure possibilities that allow them to salvage their faith. How else can they explain crystal-clear prophecies that were completely incorrect? I believe this lack of impartiality comes from a fear of the unknown. To admit that Joseph Smith did make false prophecies would be to denounce the Church, and to acknowledge ignorance of the "truths" of the universe. Trapped in the social, mental, and religious mindset that is Mormonism, most "active" members would probably not accept these facts even with a mountain of incontrovertible proof. It would destroy their social structure, their approach to life, and the beliefs to which they dogmatically hold. It should be obvious that Mormons assume Joseph Smith *is* a prophet, and study his revelations with this in mind. When finding a "failed" prophecy, they assume that it is a mystery that they cannot possibly understand, that it has already occurred in some obscure way, or that it will yet occur in some unpredictable way. As a logical thinker, I find this method to be completely unacceptable.

As I studied the work of apologists for some of these prophecies, I noted three methods they employed. The first is to suggest that the source is inaccurate, or at least not "official." This excludes dairies, the *History of the Church*, the *Journal of Discourses*, and essentially anyone who became apostate (a huge portion of the original Church). This attitude is problematic, however. Many of Joseph's revelations were found in these sources, and later canonized when it seemed prudent. Therefore, it is contradictory to reject the original source, but accept the parts that are agreeable. It is also interesting to note the inconsistency here when an apologist finds a prophecy that "came true"—no such method of ignoring a questionable source is exploited. The second is to diminish the claims made. This is often necessary with Joseph Smith, for he made many bold and daring statements. By playing a game of semantics, apologists lessen the significance of his statements (i.e., Joseph only said "should," so it doesn't "count" as a prophecy), hoping that they can find a meaning that will no longer condemn Joseph. They may also claim that Joseph was simply "speculating." Third, the apologists attempt to interpret the prophecy in the largest possible time frame. For example, Joseph's prophecies that were based on a "generation" are considered to be "still pending," and "shortly come to pass," (i.e., section 87) apparently can mean anything from a week to a century.

I offer no evidence of these tactics here. However, they are quite common. I challenge the reader, if trying to explain away these difficulties, to do so without employing at least one of the aforementioned strategies. I do not believe there is any other way to deal with some of the problems I have identified.

4). Was the original temple ceremony taken from the Masonic ritual?

Near the end of his life, Joseph Smith instituted a ceremony that was to be practiced in a "temple." In early years, it was practiced without a real temple, but starting with a temple built in Kirtland, Ohio, the Church has built numerous temples in which to practice these rites. Prior to revealing the ceremony, Joseph Smith and many other first-generation members of the Church had been involved in Freemasonry, a secret society that practiced rites inside their lodges (and still does today). Although Smith claimed the ceremony was God-given, the evidence indicates a strong similarity to the Freemasons' ceremony. Mormons today consider the ceremony sacred, and it is never to be spoken of in detail outside of the temple.^t The ceremony has been changed several times, most recently in 1990.

Because I understand the sacredness that Mormons attribute to the temple ceremony, I have debated over whether to include elements of the ceremony in this paper. I decided that it would be impossible to make all of the points I desired without including at least some of the text of the temple ceremony. This being the case, Mormons who might be offended by seeing their "sacred" temple ceremony in print should probably skip this section. I will state that some of the text in the original temple ceremony is so similar to the Masonic ritual that it seems impossible to imagine that Joseph Smith did not use it as a source when creating the temple ceremony. Additionally, many people will not recognize all of the text, because of certain changes made to the ceremony in 1990, and prior to that time.

I also make some general references to the Temple Ceremony later in this chapter. To understand these in context, it will be helpful to have been to the ceremony, or have read the text of the ceremony. The full text of the ceremony (including differences between pre- and post-1990 can be found at

<http://www.lds-mormon.com/compare.shtml>

Once again, any Mormon who has a problem with reading this outside of the temple should refrain from visiting the above link. However, although Mormons do promise not to reveal the important parts of the ceremony, I am not aware of any oath to refrain from reading it where others have printed it.

^t Gordon B. Hinckley, "Keeping the Temple Holy," Ensign, May 1990, 49

The following comparisons have been taken from *The Mormon Kingdom*, pp. 156-163

1). Temple Ceremony

... we will not reveal any of the secrets of this, the first token of the Aaronic priesthood, with its accompanying name, sign or penalty. Should we do so, we agree that our throats be cut from ear to ear and our tongues torn out by their roots.

2). Masonic Ritual

... I will ... never reveal any part or parts, art or arts, point or points of the secret arts and mysteries of ancient Freemasonry ... binding myself under no less penalty than to have my throat cut across, my tongue torn out by the roots....

3). Temple Ceremony

Sign—In executing the sign of the penalty, the right hand, palm down, is drawn sharply across the throat....

4). Masonic Ritual

This is given by drawing your right hand across your throat, the thumb next to your throat....

5). Temple Ceremony

Lord—"What is this?"
Endowee—"The second token of the Melchizedek Priesthood—The Patriarchal Grip or Sure Sign of the Nail."
Lord—"Has it a name?"
Endowee—"It has."
Lord—"Will you give it to me?"
Endowee—"I can not for I have not yet received it."

6). Masonic Ritual

"What is this?"
Ans. "A grip."
"A grip of what?"
Ans. "The grip of an Fellow Craft Mason."
"Has it a name?"
Ans. "It has."
"Will you give it to me?"
Ans. "I did not so receive it, neither can I so impart it."

7). Temple Ceremony

The Grip is given by clasping the hand and pressing the thumb in the hollow between the first and second knuckles of the hand.

8). Masonic Ritual

... the pass-grip, is given by taking each other by the right hand, as though going to shake hands, and each putting his thumb between the fore and second fingers where they join the hand, and pressing the thumb between the joints.

9). Temple Ceremony

The Grip is given by placing the thumb of back of hand and the tip of forefinger in the centre of palm, representing the piercing of the hand by a nail. It is called "The Sign of the Nail."

10). Masonic Ritual

Grand Commander now explains the grip and word of a Knight of Malta. He says to candidate—Thomas, reach hither thy finger, and feel the print of the nails; [they join right hands, and force the first finger into the centre of the palm;]

11). Temple Ceremony

The five points of fellowship are given by putting the inside of the right foot to the inside of the Lord's, the inside of your knee to his, laying your breast close to his, your left hands on each other's backs, and each one putting his mouth to the other's ear, in which position the Lord whispers:

Lord—"This is the sign of the token:
"Health to the navel, marrow in the bones..."

12). Masonic Ritual

He (the candidate) is raised on what is called the five points of fellowship, ... This is done by putting the inside of your right foot to the inside of the right foot of the person to whom you are going to give the word, the inside of your knee to his, laying your right breast against his, your left hands on the back of each other, and your mouths to each other's right ear (in which position alone you are permitted to give the word), and whisper the word *Mahhah-bone* ... He is also told that *Mahhah-bone* signifies marrow in the bone.

I have listed a few of the similarities between the Masonic ritual and the Mormon Temple Ceremony. Many of these similarities will be familiar to Mormons who have visited the temple; however, the Temple Ceremony has changed several times since the time that Joseph Smith created it. In 1990, some of the most significant changes were made. One of the most significant changes was that the "five points of fellowship" were removed. Since these "five points" are identical to those in the Masonic ritual, they are extremely important. However, those who did not visit the temple before 1990 probably will not recognize them. In

any case, even the current Temple Ceremony contains enough similar material to draw parallels between it and the Masonic ritual. Other similarities that I did not demonstrate include (but are not limited to) the use of a “compass” and “square,” which correspond to the garment markings, moving clothing from one side of the body to the other, the “square” being pressed against the right breast, the “compass” being pressed against the left breast, the wearing of aprons, the use of a mallet, searching for “light,” the presence of an “alter,” and more penal signs and oaths (which were removed in 1990). Additionally, Mormon temples are covered with Masonic symbols such as sunstones, moonstone, pentagrams, all seeing eyes, beehives, apprentice grips, and points within a circle.

There are undeniable similarities between the Temple Ceremony and the Masonic ritual. Any suggestion to the contrary demonstrates an unwillingness to deal with the facts. For example, “the five points of fellowship,” an extremely specific set of physical interactions between two people, occur in precisely the same way in both ceremonies (see 11,12). The probability of two individuals independently creating a ceremony containing these “five points,” therefore, is extremely close to zero. The comparisons above should be enough to demonstrate that there are similarities that must be explained. A simple statement that there are no similarities is an untruth at best. LDS apologists have offered a few possible explanations.

One response is that the similarities are insignificant, especially when taken in context of the entire ceremony. The following statement demonstrates this extreme point of view:

“... any similarities are immaterial and incidental. For example, the LDS endowment ceremony lasts for approximately an hour and a half. Yet, there are at the most about 5 minutes of similar material. Therefore, about 95% of the LDS ordinance is completely distinct from Mason rites. And even the few similarities that do exist are used in totally different contexts” (W. John Walsh, www.mormons.org).

I have to disagree with Walsh’s statement. How can similarities that include the same “grips,” the “five points of fellowship,” a conversation about the “name” of the “tokens” (or grips), and very similar oaths using the phrase “tongue torn out by [the] roots,” be termed “incidental”? It is impossible to attribute these things to mere coincidence, but this is exactly what Walsh has claimed. Additionally, the “tokens” are an integral part of the interaction at the veil, which represents entering the Celestial Kingdom. If these same “tokens” appear in another ceremony, it surely is not “immaterial”! But, this is the word Walsh uses. The rest of Walsh’s statement, in which he points out that the similarities to Masonry occur in only about 5 percent of the ceremony, may be accurate. However, he totally ignores the fact that the similarities occurred in some of the most significant parts of the ceremony: the secret “handshakes,” the conversation at the veil, and the “five points of fellowship.”

At this point it seems prudent to make an important clarification. Those who suggest that Joseph Smith plagiarized in creating the Temple Ceremony rarely (if ever) assert that he copied the entire ceremony from Masonry, and I am not suggesting this now. The fact that the Temple Ceremony has material not found in the Masonic ritual is not sufficient evidence for an acquittal. Certainly Joseph was capable of creating new material; this is not the argument. The issue is whether Joseph used the Masonic ritual (even in part) as a basis for the Temple Ceremony he created. Again, some of the most significant parts of the Temple Ceremony contain the similarities. The explanation of Creation that is now intermingled with the “tokens” does not hide the fact that these might have come from Masonry. So, even Walsh’s argument that only 5 percent is similar cannot explain away the strong resemblances.

Another well-known response claims that Masonry and the Temple Ceremony are similar because they have common origins. Another apologist made the following statement:

“The Prophet Joseph Smith suggested that the Endowment and Freemasonry in part emanated from the same ancient spring. Thus, some Nauvoo Masons thought of the Endowment as a restoration of a ritual only imperfectly preserved in Freemasonry and viewed Joseph Smith as a master of the underlying principles and allegorical symbolism (Heber C. Kimball to Parley P. Pratt, June 17, 1842, Church Archives).” (Kenneth W. Godfrey, www.mormons.org).

This statement gets much closer to admitting the truth. In fact, Joseph told Johnson that the Masonic rituals were “apostate endowments.” This is probably the only argument that has any merit, because it is based on a statement made by Joseph Smith. Additionally, it allows for the similarities between the two rituals. Other apologists indicate that this “same ancient spring” is the Temple of Solomon. However, there are some problems with this position.

The idea that Masonry dates back to the time of Solomon comes from Masonic myths, which imply that the Masons were organized to build Solomon’s Temple. However, there is little to support this claim. Most Freemasons do not accept this as a literal truth. The following quote is taken from the Grand Lodge of North Carolina’s website (www.grandlodge-nc.org):

“The name Freemason appeared as early as 1212 in connection with the master builders who traveled about Europe erecting the wonderful churches and cathedrals, many of which still stand and which attest to the truly amazing building arts of the craftsmen in that early age. These builders were called Freemasons because they were a privileged class, not subject to servitude or taxes, and free to travel about when many were in bondage.

“The Freemasons were jealous of their art, guarding against any proliferation which could cheapen it or could cause them to be in less demand. They knew that so long as their art was practiced only by relatively few craftsmen, the demand for their services would continue and the particular freedoms they enjoyed would persist. But they were also aware of the necessity that their work should continue, that the secrets of their craft must be passed on to future generations.”

Although this Freemason dated the society to quite early on, he did not teach that Freemasons have a connection with Solomon’s temple. He also taught that the purpose of the society was to protect the craft, not spiritual blessings. Most historians place the origin of modern Masonry much later than 1212, starting in the 16th century. There has been some speculation that it descended from the “Knights Templar,” a religious military order that originated with the crusades. However, the strongest evidence points to the organization of masons (builders) to give themselves “job security” in the middle ages, while building cathedrals, and pass down the secrets of masonry (building). Symbolic Masonry, however, is almost certainly dated to the 17th century:

“During the 17th Century the construction of Cathedrals began to wane, and some of the masonry guilds began to accept members who were not part of the construction trade, but rather men of good report. They became known as Speculative Masons or Accepted Masons. It was from these groups that the Craft or Symbolic Masonry is descended. These Lodges have several million Brothers [members] spread over the face of the earth.” (Stuart Sanabria, Past Master of the Regeneration Lodge No. 1, San Jose, Costa Rica. www.freemasonry.org).

Thus, even if Masonry is as old as some Freemasons claim, it is probably does not date to time of the Temple of Solomon. Even if it did, there is no reason to assume that the “masons” of that temple had anything to do with the Temple Rites—they were only the construction workers. Finally, as admitted by a Master Mason, the symbolic rites of Freemasonry dates from the time that the construction of Cathedrals was diminishing; when the Masons began introducing non-craftsmen into the society, they also began passing down a different tradition. To me, this makes perfect sense. While the Masons were composed of builders who wanted to protect their secrets, this was the essence of their society. When the demand for Masons started diminishing, they created a new tradition, and a new organization that accepted people who were not Masons. Obviously, certain parts of the ritual are related to true Masonry: the compass and the square, for example, would have been tools of the craft of masons.

Freemasons, therefore, do not agree that their rituals date to the time of Solomon. Additionally, the evidence that shows that Masons banded together to save their *craft*, not the rituals practiced within the buildings they constructed. The fact that the Masonic compass and square (tools of carpenters) are still part of the ritual is evidence that the “secrets” were originally the art of masonry, not rituals that allowed entrance into Heaven.

Thus, although it is a compelling argument, there is very little likelihood that the Freemasonry ritual actually comes from rituals practiced in the Temple of Solomon. The evidence does not support it. Even if the Masonic order did date back to the time of the Temple, it would still be unlikely that they passed down the ceremonies practiced in the Temple. Thus, the attempt to explain away the similarities between the Mormon Temple Ceremony and the Masonic ritual by pointing at a common origin is laden with problems. This is a serious dilemma for Mormons, because it was Joseph Smith’s position that the Masons had a degenerate version of the priesthood:

13). Benjamin F. Johnson, My Life's Review

In lighting him to bed one night he showed me his garments and explained that they were such as the Lord made for Adam from skins, and gave me such ideas pertaining to endowments as he thought proper. He told me Freemasonry, as at present, was the apostate endowments, as sectarian religion was the apostate religion.

In addition to historical issues with the claim of common origins, there are further problems. The Temple Ceremony is intricately connected with the Melchisedek Priesthood (in fact, men must possess this Priesthood to enter). But, the people at the time of Solomon were supposedly only in possession of the Aaronic Priesthood. We also know that animal sacrifice was part of what was practiced in the Temple of Solomon (1 Kings 8:63). But, there is no animal sacrifice in the Mormon Temples today. In fact, the Temple law must have been part of the Law of Moses, which was (according to Christianity) the lesser law, and fulfilled with Christ. Therefore, it does not agree with Mormon theology to imply that the Israelites during the time of Solomon were practicing anything like the modern Temple Ceremony.

If, in spite of all these problems, it is still asserted that the similarities between the Temple Ceremony and Masonry are due to common origins in a true ritual, there is still a significant problem that cannot be overcome. Joseph included the “five points of fellowship” in the original Temple Ceremony, exactly matching the “five points of fellowship” from Masonry. The “five points,” then, would have to have come from the common source, whatever it was. The problem is that the “five points” were removed from the Temple Ceremony in 1990. Apparently, these were not a necessary part of the ceremony. This does not seem right if they

came from the common source. The same problem is true of the penal signs and oaths. If they actually came from a true ritual, why were they removed in 1990?

The third explanation is probably the strongest, because it makes the weakest claims. It suggests that Joseph drew from symbolism he and others found familiar to express the truths of the Temple Ceremony. The following quote expresses this view:

“I am perfectly willing to grant that Joseph Smith borrowed from Masonry in preparing the symbolism and ordinances of the temple. However, I do not accept the anti-Mormon conclusion that this borrowing summarily invalidates the temple and its ceremonies. Logically and historically speaking, the temple's symbolism and ordinances are not automatically discredited because Joseph employed some Masonic elements to express the sacred rites and concepts that the Lord revealed to him.” (Michael T. Griffith, www.mormons.org).

I feel this is a weak claim because it suggests that Joseph received the Temple Ceremony from God, but was allowed to put it in his own words. This position is easy to argue, and somewhat difficult to refute. If Joseph simply expressed the Temple Ceremony in his own way, it is certainly possible that he used wording found in other ceremonies. This is quite similar to the defense that apologists use to defend the Book of Mormon, and wording that belies its origin in the *King James Version*; they allow Joseph the possibility of borrowing phrases from other documents in his translation.

However, the use of this argument is a serious problem. This argument requires the author to admit that Joseph plagiarized parts of the Masonic ritual. He uses the word “borrowed,” but this does not change the seriousness of the claim. This means that Joseph, after having been admitted to the confidence of the Masons (and having made an oath to never reveal their ceremony), essentially stole some of their material to create the endowment. This should be a little disconcerting for someone who believes that Joseph Smith was a prophet, in my opinion. Additionally, this would mean that the signs and tokens from the Temple are nothing but symbols that come from Masonry, with different meanings. This would also imply that it is not important to memorize the names and signs of the tokens to be able to enter Heaven, because their meaning is simply symbolic.

If this is the claim that is made, it also does not agree with Joseph's statement to Benjamin Johnson that the Masons had “apostate endowments” (see 13). So, although this claim is difficult to argue against, it seriously diminishes the significance of the Temple Ceremony, accuses Joseph Smith of plagiarism, and disagrees with Joseph's own statements.

The historical evidence demonstrates that Joseph was familiar with Masonry at the time he created the endowment (the main temple ritual). It is impossible to believe that he did not know there were similarities. Joseph was a Mason, and many members of the Church became Masons. He probably created the story that Masonry was an apostate version of the priesthood in order to explain away the strong similarities. In order to make this claim, he would have had to change the Masonic ritual, but this would not have been difficult.

These two entries from *HOTC* show that less than two months passed between Joseph rising to the “sublime degree” and introducing the endowment:

14). History of the Church, Volume 4, pp. 550, 552

(Joseph Smith, March 15-16, 1842)

Tuesday, 15.—I officiated as grand chaplain at the installation of the Nauvoo Lodge of Free Masons, at the Grove near the Temple. Grand Master Jonas, of Columbus, being present, a large number of people assembled on the occasion. The day was exceedingly fine; all things were done in order, and universal satisfaction was manifested. In the evening I received the first degree in Free Masonry in the Nauvoo Lodge, assembled in my general business office.

...

Wednesday, March 16.—I was with the Masonic Lodge and rose to the sublime degree.

15). History of the Church, Volume 5, p. 1

(Joseph Smith, May 4, 1842)

Wednesday, 4.—I spent the day in the upper part of the store, that is in my private office (so called because in that room I keep my sacred writings, translate ancient records, and receive revelations) and in my general business office, or lodge room (that is where the Masonic fraternity meet occasionally, for want of a better place) in council with General James Adams, of Springfield, Patriarch Hyrum Smith, Bishops Newel K. Whitney and George Miller, and President Brigham Young and Elders Heber C. Kimball and Willard Richards, instructing them in the principles and order of the Priesthood, attending to washings, anointings, endowments and the communication of keys pertaining to the Aaronic Priesthood, and so on to the highest order of the Melchisedek Priesthood.

This parallel also demonstrates that the same room was used for both rituals. It is also known that many Masons opposed the creation of a lodge in Nauvoo and that the request was first denied in 1840.^u After two months as a Mason, Joseph could have memorized enough material to create the Temple Ceremony. Having his own version of the ritual was certainly preferable to submitting to the authority of the Masons, and waiting for them to permit his lodge. This allowed him to change the content however he desired, claim that it was a revelation from God, and avoid possible problems with the Masons. These points make it much harder to believe that the similarities between the two are simple coincidence.

The fact that Joseph Smith was a Mason raises additional, serious questions. If, indeed, the Masonic ritual was the “apostate endowment,” (13) why did Joseph join the organization? This would have been equivalent to joining an apostate Church, which Joseph was specifically commanded not to do.^v Even if the society was nothing but a meaningless fraternity, Joseph still should not have joined. The Book of Mormons is full of scriptures that condemn “secret combinations,” and “secret oaths and covenants” (see also 2 Nephi 26:22, Alma 37:31):

^u S.H. Goodwin, *Mormonism and Masonry*, Chapter 1

^v *Joseph Smith—History*, 19

16). Ether 8:19

For the Lord worketh not in secret combinations, neither doth he will that man should shed blood, but in all things hath forbidden it, from the beginning of man.

17). Helaman 6:25

Now behold, it is these secret oaths and covenants which Alma commanded his son should not go forth unto the world, lest they should be a means of bringing down the people unto destruction.

18). 3 Nephi 5:6

And thus they did put an end to all those wicked, and secret, and abominable combinations, in the which there was so much wickedness, and so many murders committed.

However, the Masons are obviously a secret society, with “secret oaths and covenants,” meaning Joseph should never have been a member. The modern Temple Ceremony has the same problem. Before 1990, the ceremony stated the covenants were “guarded by solemn covenants and obligations of secrecy...” This sinister phrase is no longer in the ceremony:

19). Pre 1990 Endowment

(www.lds-mormon.org)

They [the tokens, names, signs and penalties] are most sacred, and are guarded by solemn covenants and obligations of secrecy to the effect that under no condition, even at the peril of your life, will you ever divulge them, except at a certain place that will be shown you hereafter.

20). Post 1990 Endowment

(www.lds-mormon.org)

They [the tokens, names and signs] are most sacred, and are guarded by solemn covenants and obligations made in the presence of God, Angels and these witnesses to hold them sacred and under no condition, even at the peril of your life, will you ever divulge them, except at a certain place in the temple that will be shown you hereafter.

Although the wording has changed, the meaning is still clear: it is not appropriate to divulge the teachings of the temple. The main difference is that the key word has been changed from “secret” to “sacred.” That Joseph Smith was once opposed to these exact principles of secrecy is obvious. In a letter written while he was in Liberty Jail, Joseph Smith and four others condemned such societies:

We further, caution our brethren, against the impropriety of the organization of bands or companies, by covenants, oaths, penalties, or secresies, but let the time past of our experience and sufferings by the wickedness of Docter Avard suffice, and let our covenants, be that of the everlasting covenant, as it is contained in the holy writ, and the things which God has revealed unto us; pure friendship, always becomes weakened, the very moment you undertake to make it stronger by penal oaths and secrecy. Your humble servants intend from henceforth to

disapprove every thing that is not in accordance with the fullness of the gospel of Jesus Christ, and which is not of a bold, frank, and upright nature.... (July, 1840, *Times and Seasons*, Volume 1, p. 133, original spelling)

Later, Joseph Smith became a Mason, and must have learned that they were a “company,” organized “by covenants, oaths, penalties [and] secrecies.” Instead of condemning the practice, as he had earlier, he included all of these things in the endowment. The penalties have since been removed, but the “covenants, oaths,” and “secrecies” still exist.

Mormons are fond of saying, “The Temple Ceremony isn’t secret; it’s sacred.”^w To Mormons, it certainly is sacred. However, it is also completely secret. Only those who have been initiated are allowed to know what happens in the temples, and specifically prohibited from disclosing this information to others. As in any secret society, once initiated, a person may know the details of what happens inside. One definition of *secret* is *revealed only to the initiated*.^x Another is *kept from knowledge or view*.^y The rites practiced in the temple fit these definitions extremely well. As is shown above, the word “secrecy” was edited out of the Temple Ceremony in 1990, where it was used to describe the oaths (see 19,20). This does not change the fact that Mormons are still bound by an oath to “never divulge them,” even “at the peril of [their] life”! I have to conclude that the Temple Ceremony, while it may be considered sacred to some, is most certainly secret.

With all of this information, it should be obvious that the endowment is in direct violation of the Book of Mormon’s warning that “the Lord worketh not in secret combinations” and Joseph’s admonition to “let [their] covenants” be the “everlasting covenant.” Whatever the “everlasting covenant” referred to (it seems to have many meanings in the *D&C*), it could not have been the Temple Ceremony, which was revealed two years later (in what is now section 132, Joseph would later refer to Celestial Marriage/polygamy as the “everlasting covenant,” but this was even later than the Temple Ceremony).

In the pre-1990 version of the Temple Ceremony, there is a statement that the Creation of Adam and Eve was “simply figurative.” Now, this wording has been removed. However, it would be impossible for the historical part of the Temple Ceremony to be literal. I will give a few examples. In the pre-1990 ceremony, Satan hired an orthodox minister to preach to Adam and Eve. This, of course, is impossible historically, since orthodox Christianity did not start until at least a century after Christ. In the pre-1990 version, God instructed Peter, James and John to teach from the *Book of Mormon* and the *Bible*. Now, it has been changed to say “Holy Scriptures.” The reason for the change is obvious: the *Book of Mormon* and the *Bible* did not exist at the time of Adam. Both of these changes have been removed, but there is one part that is doctrinally problematic, especially if it is considered literal.

When Peter, James and John came to see Adam, they exchanged their tokens, or “secret handshakes.” If these are the same Peter, James and John that were born during the time of Christ, they must have still been spirits at this time. But, Joseph Smith explained that only angels (resurrected personages with flesh and bones) could shake hands.^z Therefore, how were Peter, James, and John able to perform the “handshakes” with Adam? Unless they already had a body, it would have been impossible. Then, according to Mormon theology, Adam could not have received the signs and tokens of the temple from Peter, James and John. From whom did

^w David O. McKay, “The Purpose of Temples,” *Ensign*, Jan. 1972, 38

^x *Merriam-Webster’s Collegiate Dictionary*

^y *Merriam-Webster’s Collegiate Dictionary*

^z *Doctrine and Covenants*, Section 129

he receive them? Did he receive them at all, or is the whole story an allegory? If it is, it lessens the importance of whole ceremony.

There are more problems that deal with Lucifer. At a later time in the ceremony, Lucifer faces the camera and threatens the people “in this temple” by saying they will “be in [his] power” if they do not live up to the covenants they make. He is obviously speaking to the audience, because there is no temple in the video. Surely this cannot be viewed as a literal occurrence. This is also completely out of character for a being that is referred to as “The Father of all Lies.” Why would he warn people to keep their covenants? Wouldn’t he want to trick them into thinking that the covenants were unimportant? I see this statement as a message from the creators of the Temple Ceremony, not a literal statement ever made by Lucifer. It is a good example (along with the penal signs) of using fear to encourage members to “keep their covenants.”

Another problem involving Lucifer is Adam’s prayer. After he prays in (apparently) the correct manner, Lucifer answers him. Lucifer does not fool Adam (although Adam does not recognize him from encounters in the Garden of Eden), but this raises an important question. Is it possible for Lucifer to answer a sincere prayer? If it is, Mormons might need to question any “testimony” they have received through prayer. It is also interesting that no one ever answers Adam’s prayer. Peter, James and John are sent, but to “observe conditions generally...and learn whether Adam has been true...” When they arrive, they engage in conversation with Lucifer, and later Adam. He has to explain to them that he is “looking for messengers...to teach him.” But, they do not teach him anything; they only check if he is willing to sell his “tokens” (basically, the reason they were sent in the first place). So, the only person who ever “answered” Adam’s prayer was Lucifer, and Adam’s request for “further light and knowledge” is ignored (until later).

If the Temple Ceremony was inspired, I am unsure which parts are essential for salvation. Was it the “signs and tokens” that Joseph Smith copied from Freemasonry? Or, was it the story of the sectarian minister that was later edited out of the ceremony? Is the retelling of the story of Adam (this makes three, after the books of *Abraham* and *Moses*), which makes no literal sense, important? Is it the names of the tokens, which apparently are to be used as passwords to enter heaven, and which are inextricably linked with the signs, tokens and penalties from Freemasonry? Are the markings on the garment very significant, when one learns that they originally represented the square and compass (tools of builders, or masons)? Perhaps the “new name” one receives is especially vital—but why is the same name used for every person who enters on a particular day of the month? I cannot find anything in the Temple Ceremony that makes it especially important, but it apparently is necessary for salvation.

When I went through the temple, I simply thought it was strange. I had no idea how much stranger it had been before 1990. Before that, it was apparently even longer and more bizarre. I did not find anything remarkable or inspiring about the endowment, however. After I was initiated, I rarely attended the temple, because I felt uncomfortable attending. I did not ever reach the conclusion that the ceremony was uninspired; I just did not enjoy the ceremony. One thing did bother me, and that was the idea of “vain repetitions.” Attending such a long ceremony that uses the same words for every session seemed just as “vain” as a Catholic reciting “Our Father who art in heaven....”

After studying its origins, reading a book entitled *Freemasonry Exposed*, and doing additional research, I came to the conclusion that the Temple Ceremony contained nothing new or special. I believe that Joseph was interested in Masonry, but wanted to give it religious significance and have complete control over it. A few months after being initiated, he created a

ceremony that let him do exactly that. I see no evidence of inspiration in what he created, and this is even more obvious when one examines all of the changes that were made since he created it.

On the other hand, the ceremony is disturbing, and this, most likely, is due to the Freemasons. Just to put the ceremony in perspective, these (and more) things should seem normal to a Temple-active Mormon (pre-1990): dressing up in “secret” clothing, symbolically cutting one’s own throat, whispering passwords into another’s ears, giving secret handshakes, chanting words that supposedly come from the Adamic tongue, and reciting words for people who are represented only by a box of cards. Luckily for me, I was able to avoid some of this because I entered the temple after 1990. However, even the post-1990 ceremony requires one to make strong oaths. If God existed, I do not believe that he would require such oaths and actions from his children. If this were his true nature, I would probably not choose to serve him.

In this section, I did not deal with “evidences” that the Temple Ceremony is authentic. These evidences consist of comparisons to ancient rituals practiced in hundreds of religions. The idea is to prove that Joseph restored some ancient ceremony by drawing parallels between certain parts of the modern ceremony and these rituals. There is no doubt in my mind that parallels exist, but this is hardly proof of Joseph’s revelatory power. He copied a ceremony that was at least a century old, and it is likely (and there is evidence) that those who created symbolic Freemasonry rites drew from pagan, magical and religious rites that they were familiar with. There are parallels between the Temple Ceremony and Wicca organizations as well, but apologists usually do not mention these. Therefore, if there are parallels, they are probably due to the Masonic connection, not some “inspiration” of Joseph’s. This paragraph does not do justice to the “evidences” given by apologists, but I felt I should at least mention this dubious line of logic.

Based on all of the information that I have discussed here, and much more, I do not accept the Temple Ceremony as authentic, inspired, or meaningful. Even at a symbolic or allegorical level, I do not find the ritual useful, but disturbing, confusing, and poorly thought-out. Therefore, I doubt very much that Joseph Smith was inspired to recreate the original Christian Temple ceremony.

5). Was the *Doctrine and Covenants* given by God?

According to a recent prophet of the LDS Church, the *Doctrine and Covenants* contains “revelations from Israel’s God.”^{aa} Nearly all of the sections are written in first person, and phrases such as “Behold, I am God,” and “I, the Lord God” permeate the majority of the sections. Thus, most of the *D&C* is purportedly the actual word of God through Joseph Smith. Because the speaker refers to himself as Jesus Christ quite frequently (e.g., D&C 11:28), it is obvious that the “God” referred to is Christ. As I mentioned earlier, Mormons believe that Christ was “Israel’s God,” Jehovah.^{bb} Thus, within the context of LDS belief, for Jesus to refer to Himself as “Lord God,” “God,” and “Jesus Christ” is perfectly consistent.

This puts the *Doctrine and Covenants* in the unique position of being the only book in the LDS canon that purports to be recounted by God Himself. Although other scriptural books contain words of prophets, who occasionally quote God, the *D&C* is different—with the exception of a few chapters, the entire book contains alleged words of Jesus Christ. Such a claim demands extensive scrutiny. In this section, however, I will deal with only a few key points that suggest to me the *D&C* is not the word of God.

In the section on prophecies that did not come to pass, I quoted a few verses from the *Doctrine and Covenants*. As I showed, it is unreasonable to suggest that those prophecies ever occurred. The common view of God held by most religions (and certainly Mormonism) does not allow God to make mistakes or lie. Because those verses were assumed to be the words of Christ, I feel that it is unreasonable to believe the *D&C* was truly given through inspiration.

Another interesting aspect of the *D&C* is its use of *KJV* style English (Elizabethan). In addition to using such similar word patterns, the *D&C* actually contains quotes from the *KJV*. For example, the following two descriptions of the “word of God” are practically identical:

1). Hebrews 4:12

For the word of God is **quick, and powerful, and sharper than any twoedged sword, piercing even to the dividing asunder of soul and spirit, and of the joints and marrow, and is a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart.**

2). D&C 33:1

BEHOLD, I say unto you, my servants Ezra and Northrop, open ye your ears and hearken to the voice of the Lord your God, whose word is **quick and powerful, sharper than a two-edged sword, to the dividing asunder of the joints and marrow, soul and spirit; and is a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart.**

In *Hebrews*, the author did not appear to be quoting God, but rather giving prophetic advice to members of the Church (a reading of Hebrews 4 should demonstrate this). In D&C 33, however, the words are clearly meant to be those of God (verses 4, 6, 12, 16 and 18 make this quite clear). Although this is the most accurate version, the same verse from Hebrews has

^{aa} Ezra Taft Benson, “The Book of Mormon and the Doctrine and Covenants,” *Ensign*, May 1987, 83

^{bb} Richard G. Scott, “Jesus Christ, Our Redeemer,” *Ensign*, May 1997, 53

been paraphrased six more times in the *D&C*.^{cc} Quotation of the *Bible*, using the wording of the *KJV*, does not seem realistic (to me) for the words of God. However, there is the possibility that Christ chose to mimic the *KJV* wording because he knew the readers would be familiar with it. On the other hand, if the *D&C* was simply the words of Joseph Smith (as I believe), quotation from the *KJV* seems both reasonable and realistic. I believe that the majority of the *Doctrine and Covenants* fits the profile of sermon-like speeches very well.

It is also interesting to note that the *Doctrine and Covenants* is extremely repetitious. Certainly, this may be due in part to heavy quotation of the *KJV*, but some repetitions are almost ridiculous. For example, sections 15 and 16 are identical, with the exception of the name of the person God speaks to. The first verse of these two sections (given to John and Peter Whitmer) is as follows:

3). D&C 15:1

HEARKEN, my servant John, and listen to the words of Jesus Christ, your Lord and your Redeemer.

4). D&C 16:1

HEARKEN, my servant Peter, and listen to the words of Jesus Christ, your Lord and your Redeemer.

The rest of both sections is as follows:

5). D&C 15:2-6 (also 16:2-6)

For behold, I speak unto you with sharpness and with power, for mine arm is over all the earth.

And I will tell you that which no man knoweth save me and thee alone—

For many times you have desired of me to know that which would be of the most worth unto you.

Behold, blessed are you for this thing, and for speaking my words which I have given unto you according to my commandments.

And now, behold, I say unto you, that the thing which will be of the most worth unto you will be to declare repentance unto this people, that you may bring souls unto me, that you may rest with them in the kingdom of my Father. Amen.

Personally, I feel that Joseph Smith simply wrote this once, and changed John's name to Peter in order to cover two missionary calls with one revelation. This, however, is not what I find amusing about this section. Since the original was recorded, the Church has added headings to explain each section. The heading for section 15 contains this ironic (and false) statement:

The message is intimately and impressively personal, in that the Lord tells of what was known only to John Whitmer and himself.

^{cc} This pattern of quoting one *Bible* verse multiple times is overwhelmingly obvious in the *Doctrine and Covenants*. This is also true of the *Book of Mormon*, as will be shown in Chapter 5.

Certainly, this message cannot be called “personal,” when the exact same words were later given to another man (his brother). It is interesting to find that “what was known only to John Whitmer” was the exact same message that was given to Peter. For some reason, section 16 is not identified as being “intimately personal,” even though the exact same language was used. In fairness to Joseph Smith, he did not include this heading (which could not have been placed in a worse spot), but it is humorous that what seems to have been a generic missionary call has been labeled as “intimately and impressively personal.”

In addition to the repetitious language, and the *Bible* verses integrated into the revelations, the *D&C* also contains several sections that detail instructions for the mundane activities of Joseph Smith and the Church. Other sections are directed at early Church members (usually either rebuking them for mistakes, or calling them to serve), and one section^{dd} even contains a mandate for Joseph Smith’s wife to accept polygamy, and be faithful to him, with a threat of destruction. There are also some sections that specify doctrinal beliefs of the Church, and teach new ideas not contained in any other of the “Standard Works.”

Although I consider it hard to take the *D&C* seriously, as it appears to be mostly Joseph’s ideas mixed with *Bible* quotes and some direct instructions from “the Lord,” this information does not prove the *Doctrine and Covenants* to be Joseph Smith’s creation. However, it is also a fact that the revelations given therein were changed over the years. Unless God was misquoted, or simply misspoke, it seems amazing that such changes would be necessary. It also seems to fly in the face of statements from the *D&C*, such as the following:

6). D&C 1:6-7, 38-39

Behold, this is mine authority, and the authority of my servants, and my preface unto the book of my commandments, which I have given them to publish unto you, O inhabitants of the earth.

Wherefore, fear and tremble, O ye people, for what I the Lord have decreed in them shall be fulfilled.

...

What I the Lord have spoken, I have spoken, and I excuse not myself; and though the heavens and the earth pass away, my word shall not pass away, but shall all be fulfilled, whether by mine own voice or by the voice of my servants, it is the same.

For behold, and lo, the Lord is God, and the Spirit beareth record, and the record is true, and the truth abideth forever and ever. Amen.

This preface to Joseph’s revelations from God claims several things: what is in them “shall be fulfilled,” God’s word “shall not pass away,” and “the record is true, and the truth abideth forever....” It seems reasonable to expect that the revelations preceded by these statements would have remained unchanged—or at least that the changes would not alter the actual meaning of what God “revealed.” However, they were edited significantly, and even major doctrinal statements were changed.

As we can see in the above quoted verses, the Lord called them a preface to the “book of commandments.” The first book printed containing Joseph’s revelations was known by the same

^{dd} *Doctrine and Covenants*, section 132

name: “The Book of Commandments.” Joseph made some important changes to the revelations printed in this book. One such change dealt with Joseph Smith’s role as a Church authority:

7). Book of Commandments 4:2

And now, behold this shall you say unto him: —I the Lord am God, and I have given these things unto my servant Joseph, and I have commanded him that he should stand as a witness of these things, nevertheless I have caused him that he should enter into a covenant with me, that he should not show them except I command him and he has no power over them except I grant it unto him; and he has a gift to translate the book and I have commanded him that he shall pretend to no other gift, for I will grant him no other gift.

The reader will notice that the Lord claimed Joseph would receive “no other gift,” other than to translate the *Book of Mormon*. This revelation was given in March of 1829, before the LDS Church was ever established. That Joseph would receive no other gift than that of translation was soon refuted by his claim to prophecy, his retranslation of the *Bible*, his later “translation” of *Abraham*, and his claim that only he could receive revelations for the Church (and that he was the head of the Church).^{ee} When the *Doctrine and Covenants* was first printed (1835), it included a reprint of this revelation. Not surprisingly, the words had changed:

8). D&C 5:2-4

And now, behold, this shall you say unto him—he who spake unto you, said unto you: I, the Lord, am God, and have given these things unto you, my servant Joseph Smith, Jun., and have commanded you that you should stand as a witness of these things;

And I have caused you that you should enter into a covenant with me, that you should not show them except to those persons to whom I commanded you; and you have no power over them except I grant it unto you.

And you have a gift to translate the plates; and this is the first gift that I bestowed upon you; and I have commanded that you should pretend to no other gift **until my purpose is fulfilled in this**; for I will grant unto you no other gift **until it is finished**.

In the revelation from the *Book of Commandments*, Joseph was instructed to speak for the Lord to Martin Harris. In the *D&C*, the wording has been changed so that the message (everything after the dash) addresses Joseph rather than Martin. Truly, the change (which still contains the instructions to repeat the message to Martin Harris) makes for some awkward wording in the first sentence. Regardless, the only significant changes to the message itself occur in verse 4. I have bolded the added words, and they show an insertion that completely negates the original meaning. The original text taught that Joseph was to have no other gift. The new reading allows for no limit to other gifts, as long as they occurred after the translation of the *Book of Mormon*.

In addition to this doctrinal change, the new wording appears to be intentionally deceitful. In verse one of both books, it explains that the revelation was given at the request of

^{ee} In D&C 28, Smith received a revelation denying others the right to receive revelations, directly in response to a Hiram Page claiming to receive them through a seer stone. Smith was also identified as the head of the Church in this section.

Martin Harris. However, the altered version surely was not given at his request, but was a change made after the printing. The *Book of Commandments* was not printed until 1833; four years after Joseph received this answer for Harris. Then, two years later, he rewrote it and made it appear that the original revelation given to Harris allowed him to receive further spiritual “gifts.” With the *D&C* as it stands today, no one who read this section would realize that the original revelation (as given to Martin Harris) specified that God would grant Smith “no other gift.” It is historically inaccurate to pretend the current printing is what Harris heard, and casual readers will be oblivious to this misrepresentation (which, I imagine, was Smith’s intention).

Another change of interest has to do with Oliver Cowdery, who apparently had become familiar with a “divining rod.” A divining rod is a stick that is believed to have magical properties, and is used to indicate the presence of water or ore in the ground. Oliver received a revelation (through Joseph) about this in 1829. Although the Lord seemed accepting of Oliver’s “witchcraft,” he taught that the power came from him:

9). BC 7:3

O remember, these words and keep my commandments. Remember this is your gift. Now this is not all, for you have another gift, which is the **gift of working with the rod**: behold it has told you things: behold there is no other power save God, that can cause this **rod of nature**, to work in your hands, for it is the work of God; and therefore whatsoever you shall ask me to tell you by that means, that will I grant unto you, that you shall know.

Smith undoubtedly received some criticism for this verse, which basically taught that the Lord supported “divining,” something usually associated with the occult. Regardless of why, however, Smith apparently felt the need to edit out such references when he made the next printing:

10). D&C 8:5-9

Oh, remember these words, and keep my commandments. Remember, this is your gift.

Now this is not all thy gift; for you have another gift, which is the **gift of Aaron**; behold, it has told you many things;

Behold, there is no other power, save the power of God, that can cause this **gift of Aaron** to be with you.

Therefore, doubt not, for it is the gift of God; and you shall hold it in your hands, and do marvelous works; and no power shall be able to take it away out of your hands, for it is the work of God.

And, therefore, whatsoever you shall ask me to tell you by that means, that will I grant unto you, and you shall have knowledge concerning it.

Whatever “the gift of Aaron” meant, it surely is not interpreted as a divining rod today. Again, I believe Smith intended it this way. Once more, the meaning of a God-given revelation was totally changed. Worse still, this is another example of historical inaccuracy: it appears to the casual observer that this is the revelation given to Oliver. Although it resembles it, this simply is not what Oliver heard in 1829 (as the section is dated in the heading). It is a doctored version that appears to be in harmony with Judeo-Christian ideas, whereas the original associated the Church with the occult.

In chapter 24 of the *Book of Commandments*, Smith identified both himself and Oliver Cowdery as “elders” of the Church:

11). BC 24:3-4

Which commandments were given to Joseph, who was called of God and ordained an apostle of Jesus Christ, an elder of this church;

And also to Oliver, who was called of God an apostle of Jesus Christ, an elder of this church, and ordained under his hand:

Apparently, in 1835, Smith wanted to make it understood that he was superior to Oliver, by changing the revelation to read as follows:

12). D&C 20:2-3

Which commandments were given to Joseph Smith, Jun., who was called of God, and ordained an apostle of Jesus Christ, to be the first elder of this church;

And to Oliver Cowdery, who was also called of God, an apostle of Jesus Christ, to be the second elder of this church, and ordained under his hand;

Now, instead of both having equal callings of “elder,” Smith took the place of “first elder,” while Oliver was left with “second elder.” Of course, it is possible that God meant this all along. However, I find it much more likely that Smith felt threatened, and wanted to emphasize his role as leader of the Church.

Another change in the D&C has to do with the priesthood. The priesthood is an important part of LDS Church history. The priesthood is the Mormons’ claim to ultimate authority from God to do his ordinances, act in his name, and run his Church on earth. Without this, the Mormon Church would be the same as other churches, which it claims have no priesthood—this invalidates all their ordinances, like baptism. In D&C 27 (dated August 1830), it mentions that John the Baptist, Peter, James and John had come to restore the priesthood. Joseph Smith later described this experience as having happened in April of 1829.^{ff} Since there is no other documentation describing the event, except Smith’s testimony many years after the fact, the revelation from D&C 27 is very important in demonstrating that the priesthood was in place in the early years of the Church.

However, D&C 27 is inaccurately dated August 1830. A revelation *was* given in August of 1830: *Book of Commandments* Chapter 28. However, this revelation made no mention of John the Baptist, Peter, James or John. In D&C 27, directly after the sixth verse of BC 28, ten verses detailing information about the restoration of the priesthood were inserted. Thus, although a significant portion of section 27 was given in 1830, everything regarding the priesthood was added after 1833.

I believe it probable that Joseph had not even thought of the issue of priesthood when he started the Church in 1830. In any case, he felt the need to add to the Lord’s words when he reprinted this section. It is worth noting that the information about the priesthood was inserted into the middle of a sentence, allegedly dictated by Christ himself. Similarly, Smith added over 100 words to Chapter 24 (now D&C 20), which detailed the offices of the priesthood. Both of these interpolations help to perpetuate the idea that the Church as founded

^{ff} *History of the Church*, Volume 1, 38

in 1830 used the same basic organization as today. However, the fact that changes to the revelations were apparently necessary causes one to seriously question when the priesthood was “restored”—or if the entire story was fraudulent.

In addition to these few I have presented, Joseph and others made many more changes to the *Doctrine and Covenants* revelations. I find it difficult to accept that God may have revealed his words to Joseph Smith, and asked him to change them later. I find it particularly difficult to believe when the changes amount to serious changes in doctrine and historicity. Finally, I consider it deceitful by all involved (including those who printed recent versions of the *D&C*) to date and describe these changed revelations as if they were the original versions. If a revelation was changed, it should read “originally received in [year], modified in [year],” or something to similar effect. To carelessly leave the original dates demonstrates either ignorance to the changes, or lack of desire to admit them. I believe it is more of the latter, although ignorance surely is possible. Joseph Fielding Smith must also have suffered from one or both of these problems, for he claimed the following:

13). Doctrines of Salvation, 170

There was no need for eliminating, changing, or adjusting any part to make it fit; but each new revelation on doctrine and priesthood fitted in its place perfectly to complete the whole structure, as it had been prepared by the Master Builder.

Obviously, this is not true; Joseph had to change the revelations, because they did not teach what he wanted. Changing the doctrines of a Church is not reprehensible; adding information is not devious; even making doctrines appear to be older than they are is not criminal. However, I see no way to resolve what has been done with the idea that God dictated these revelations. If the Lord gave the words, they should have been correct the first time, and touch-ups should have been considered blasphemy. If it was Joseph who created them, then his actions are not surprising or particularly bad. Unfortunately for Mormons today, this would mean the *Doctrine and Covenants* is not really the word of God, but Joseph’s way of controlling others (which the revelations did quite successfully). Changes in the revelations cannot be reconciled with Christ’s claim that “my words shall not pass away.” David Whitmer said it best:

14). An Address to All Believers in Christ, 61

Some of the Latter Day Saints have claimed that God had the same right to authorize Brother Joseph to add to any revelations certain words and facts, that He had to give him any revelations at all: but only those who are trusting in an arm of flesh and are in spiritual blindness, would pretend to make this claim; that God would give his servants some revelations, command them to publish them in His Book of Commandments, and then authorize them to change and add to them some words which change and reverse the original meaning: as if God had changed his mind after giving his word. No brethren! God does not change and work in any such manner as this; all those who believe that God does work this way, my prayer for them is that they may repent, for they are in utter spiritual blindness.

Whitmer made it clear that the members knew about the changes. In the same pamphlet, he explained that some had even questioned the validity of the changes, but eventually trusted that Joseph Smith knew what he was doing. Anyone who believes in revelations like those in the *D&C* must find it disturbing that changes to God’s words were

made after the fact—sometimes in ways that changed the meaning. How can both wordings be correct—which version should we trust?

The typical Mormon view of revelation from God is totally alien to concepts like imperfect messages that need refining within a few years. The Mormon concept of God is that he is unchanging.^{ss} How, then, can one explain the fact that God’s word appears to change in ways that are so easily explained by human mistakes and motivations? As usual, I believe the issues here are quite easily understood, if one only assumes Joseph himself authored the revelations, without assistance from a divine being. Certainly, I can find no good reason to believe these “revelations” came from God, whom I would certainly expect to be a little more consistent.

^{ss} Mormon 9:19

Chapter 5

The Book of Mormon

The *Book of Mormon* is probably the most important tool LDS missionaries use in their proselyting. As a missionary, I was taught how to “prove” to an investigator that every part of the Church was true based on his “testimony” of the *Book of Mormon*. This is a clever argument that I actually agree with. If the *Book of Mormon* is “true,” it almost definitely establishes that the Mormon Church is God’s Church. However, most people “know” the *Book of Mormon* is true because they have felt some kind of “spiritual” confirmation. Although I believe that all sorts of evidences speak out against the *Book of Mormon*, here I will only a few. I believe the following issues demonstrate that it is unreasonable to believe the *Book of Mormon* is an ancient document: (1) the author of the *Book of Mormon* copied large and small texts from the *King James Version* of the *Bible*; (2) the author of the *Book of Mormon* was “inspired” by stories from the *King James Version* of the *Bible*; (3) the *Book of Mormon* contains ideas that were found in *View of the Hebrews* (1823); (4) the *Book of Mormon* contains similarities to *History of the American Indians*; (5) the *Book of Mormon* contradicts LDS doctrine; (6) changes in the *Book of Mormon* since the 1830 printing do not support the idea that it was an “inspired” translation; (7) the *Book of Mormon* contains implausible history; (8) Joseph Smith Sr. had a dream similar to Lehi’s dream, which became a large part of the book and Mormon belief; (9) so-called “proofs” of the *Book of Mormon* are not very strong; The *Book of Mormon* witnesses are not particularly credible; (11) The account of the solution for the loss of 116 pages of the translation is not believable.

1) Does the *Book of Mormon* contain plagiarized material from the *King James Version*?

Because I was born in the LDS Church, and was active all my life until I began to doubt the Church, I am quite familiar with the “standard works.” Even as a teenager, I noticed many similarities between the *Bible*, the *Book of Mormon*, the *Pearl of Great Price*, and the *Doctrine and Covenants*. Because I always considered them to be inseparable (like one enormous book of scripture), this was pretty insignificant to me. In many cases, I could not distinguish between a biblical doctrine and a doctrine from the *Book of Mormon*, and I saw no reason to. As I grew more knowledgeable, I became aware of where different teachings were found. Still I saw no reason to separate the two. On my mission, this all changed.

My mission required me to understand people who had never seen the *Book of Mormon*, but were firm believers in the *Bible*. Many people whom I taught were not very familiar with either, and these people converted with less effort. It was frustrating because the same people often thought that the *Book of Mormon* was the *Bible*, and couldn’t understand what was special about our message. Others were very familiar with the *Bible*, and would use it to argue against us, or attack the *Book of Mormon*. I was forced to learn which doctrines had biblical backing, and which relied on other of the “standard works.” I became much more familiar with the *Bible* during this time.

While serving my mission, I had a few doubts about the *Book of Mormon*. Once, it so happened that I was studying *1 Corinthians* and *Mosiah* at the same time. I remember reading *Mosiah* 16:10, and realizing (probably for the first time) that it was almost a direct quote of *1 Corinthians* 15:53. I searched through the index for the same quote in the O.T., hoping there was an explanation for this *New Testament* writing found in the *Book of Mormon*, but I found nothing that satisfied me. Even worse, I noticed *Mosiah* 16:8, just two verses earlier. This was basically a quote from the same chapter of *1 Corinthians*! The worst part was that these two quotes were repeated nowhere in the *Bible*; they seemed to be unique to Paul, and unique to that epistle.

I had always been a firm believer that, although prophets spoke with God, they chose their own words to express the sacred truths. Modern-day prophets, biblical prophets and (I thought) *Book of Mormon* prophets all had their own style. It was disconcerting to me, then, to find that Abinadi had used Paul’s words over 200 years before Paul wrote them. No one else in the *Bible* ever chose to express the teachings about the resurrection in the way that Paul did. Couldn’t Abinadi have expressed the point in another fashion? I mentioned this problem to a missionary, and he suggested that Paul might have quoted Abinadi. But, as I read the two passages, I had the distinct impression that Abinadi’s quote had come second—it seemed to be answering the question, “O death, where is thy sting? O grave, where is thy victory?”

If I had been right, it would have meant that the *Book of Mormon* was not an ancient document. Knowing the implications of my line of reasoning, I put the doubts at the back of my mind. I must admit that I became much less dogmatic in my defense of the *Book of Mormon* after this incident. I think I also lost a lot of zeal to share the gospel with others. I did not realize what was happening then, and I kept busy enough that my doubts never shattered my belief system.

In my study since that time, I have learned quite a bit. Sadly, the conclusion I came to was that the *Book of Mormon* was full of plagiarized material, which simply could not have been quotes or similar phrasing. I could not accept the argument that Joseph Smith used phrasing

from the *KJV* to translate the *Book of Mormon*. It wouldn't even make sense to do this; the *KJV* was written in a style of English that was outdated by Joseph Smith's time. I am sure that Joseph used phrasing (and quotes) from the *KJV* when writing the *Book of Mormon*, but I believe he did this in the same way a preacher integrates scriptural quotes seamlessly into his sermon—he created material and integrated biblical wording. A study of Joseph's writings will demonstrate that he was proficient at this technique, even when he was not “translating” something.^a I believe that a study of the similarities demonstrates Joseph both copied and referred to biblical texts that *Book of Mormon* authors simply wouldn't have been able to access.

In the following analysis, I will assume the authors of the *Bible* were the traditionally accepted ones. I am aware of evidence to the contrary, but this is not relevant in this section. It is immaterial to me whether *Paul* or someone else wrote the letters in the *N.T.* The time period is the problem—not the names of the authors.

To start the analysis, it is worth mentioning chapters in the *Book of Mormon* that are essentially identical to certain *Bible* chapters. Here is a short accounting of these chapters:

1). Percentages of material (by number of chapters) that come from *KJV*.

Small Plates	
18 chapters/65 chapters = 27.69%	
Large Plates	
7 chapters/146 chapters = 4.79%	
<i>Book of Mormon</i>	
25 chapters/239 chapters = 10.46%	

The terms “Small Plates” and “Large Plates” have reference to the alleged “plates” that Joseph Smith claimed he received from an angel. According to the *BM*, the “Small Plates” contained a spiritual history, whereas the “Large Plates” contained mostly secular writings (after the “Small Plates” were filled with writing, the “Large Plates” contained both secular and spiritual histories).^b

These totals above represent *Book of Mormon* chapters that are nearly word for word copies of *Bible* chapters. The similarities are so obvious that it would be impossible to deny them. Therefore, the chapter headings indicate that the text is similar to biblical texts (this was not the case in the original *BM*, however).

Based on the number of chapters quoted and total number of chapters, a little over 10% of the *Book of Mormon* chapters could have been copied almost word-for-word from the *Bible*. This is a significant amount of the book. However, the percentage of the “small plates” is almost 28%. Considering that the “small plates” were supposed to contain the spiritual history, it is revealing to find that over a fourth of its chapters come directly from the *Bible*. In another comparison using word counting, I found that the percentage of copied material on the “small plates” was closer to 17%, meaning that the copied chapters from the *Bible* are shorter, on average. In any case, this is a significant portion of the material, especially considering the length of the translation of the “small plates” (about 142 pages, including extensive footnotes added in later years).

^a For example, Joseph Smith once declared, “...if any man preach any other Gospel than that which I have preached, he shall be cursed,” (TJS, 366) which is clearly derived from Galatians 1:9, “If any man preach any other gospel unto you than that ye have received, let him be accursed.”

^b *Book of Mormon*, “A Brief Explanation About the *Book of Mormon*” & “Words of Mormon”

It is important to note that these statistics represent the amount of material that is *indisputably* the same as the *KJV*. This does not take into account all of the inserted phrasing and quoting that I feel also came from the *KJV*. It is important, however, to note that a significant portion of the book is not original, but was already contained in the *KJV*.

Even the idea that *Book of Mormon* prophets copied down sections of the *Bible* is problematic. For example, Nephi copied 18 chapters from Isaiah, presumably from the “brass plates.” According to Jacob, a *BM* prophet, it was very difficult to engrave words on the plates.^c Why would Nephi have tediously copied 18 chapters from Isaiah onto the “small plates,” when he already had the “brass plates”?

More problems can be found in 3 Nephi 12-14 (almost identical to Matthew 5-7), where the text implies that Matthew’s recording of the Sermon on the Mount was extremely accurate. According to the text, Jesus visited the ancient inhabitants of the Americas and preached the same sermon he preached in 3 Nephi 12-14. Unfortunately, Jesus said a number of things to the Nephites (the people in the Americas) that just would not have made sense to them. For example, in 12:41, Jesus said, “And whosoever shall compel thee to go a mile, go with him twain.” This made perfect sense to the Jews, because Roman law allowed soldiers and officials to force the Jews (their captives) to carry their burdens exactly one “mile” (*milion*=1680 yards today). First, it is unlikely that the Nephites even knew of the “mile” used by the Romans. Certainly they were not familiar with, and had never been subjected to Roman law. Thus, this would have been a useless statement for them. I believe Joseph Smith did not appreciate the political context of Jesus’ statement, and therefore copied over something that did not make sense in the Nephite world.

In other cases, the wording was changed: “farthing” was replaced with “senine,”^d (12:26) and the phrase, “scribes and Pharisees” (12:20) was removed by slightly modifying the surrounding text. It would have been easy for Smith to identify and remove these sayings that obviously would have been foreign to the Nephites. However, in a case where he most likely did not understand the political significance of the verse, he did not modify it. This leads me to the conclusion that Christ did not come to the Americas, but that Joseph Smith simply copied one of his sermons from the *New Testament*.

In my opinion, it is unlikely that Jesus would have used an almost identical discourse when teaching the Nephites. Surely they had unique problems that he could have addressed. Instead, he taught them exactly what he taught the Jews, much of which was probably due to Jewish customs (praying on street corners in 13:5, divorce laws in 12:32, suing in 12:40, fasting traditions in 13:16, paying debts/going to prison in 12:26, etc.). A near duplicate of 3 chapters from Matthew (ignoring “mistranslations” such as those changed in the *JST*) seems ill suited to the Nephites, who had many problems of their own (like antichrists, immense wars, “secret combinations,” the recent destruction of their government, and huge natural disasters directly preceding Christ’s coming).^e

Thus, in my opinion, the “copied” texts in the *BM* make it hard to believe the *BM* is an ancient document. The texts that parallel *NT* texts are very hard to accept—the *NT* was translated several times, and originally written in Greek. Yet, when Joseph was translating a

^c *Book of Mormon*, Jacob 1:4

^d *Farthing* is a word dating from Middle English, and came to mean ¼ of a penny in Britain, and also can mean “a very small amount.” *Senine* has reference to a *BM* money unit worth the very least. It is interesting to note that *farthing* would have been just as correct in the *BM* as in the *KJV*, since it is not a Greek word, but a British word that gets the closest to describing the quadrans, a monetary unit from the time of Christ. More recent translations simply render it “cent,” since that is more familiar to American readers.

^e All of these problems can be found in the book of 3 Nephi, in the *Book of Mormon*

book supposedly written in “Reformed Egyptian,”^f his wording was nearly identical to that of the *KJV* scholars—even if the 1500-year-old originals were identical, it seems unlikely that the same rendering would result (especially considering the many translation errors in the *KJV*).

In spite of these problems, it is even more revealing to study the similar material in the more original texts of the *Book of Mormon*. For example, the following is a good example of a unique *New Testament* phrase being repeated several times in the *Book of Mormon*:

2). “in the gall of bitterness, and in the bonds of iniquity.”

(also see Mosiah 27:29, Alma 36:18)

Acts 8:23

For I perceive that thou art **in the gall of bitterness, and in the bond of Iniquity**.

Alma 41:11

And now, my son, all men that are in a state of nature, or I would say, in a carnal state, are **in the gall of bitterness and in the bonds of iniquity**; they are without God in the world, and they have gone contrary to the nature of God; therefore, they are in a state contrary to the nature of happiness.

Mormon 8:31

Yea, it shall come in a day when there shall be great pollutions upon the face of the earth; there shall be murders, and robbing, and lying, and deceivings, and whoredoms, and all manner of abominations; when there shall be many who will say, Do this, or do that, and it mattereth not, for the Lord will uphold such at the last day. But wo unto such for they are **in the gall of bitterness and in the bonds of iniquity**.

Moroni 8:14

Behold I say unto you, that he that supposeth that little children need baptism is **in the gall of bitterness and in the bonds of iniquity**, for he hath neither faith, hope, nor charity; wherefore, should he be cut off while in the thought, he must go down to hell.

The phrase “gall of bitterness” appears only once in the *New Testament* (and never in the *Old Testament*). Its meaning is fairly obvious from the context, but it does not seem to have been a common expression. However, the same phrase shows up five times in the *Book of Mormon*. The longer version—“the gall of bitterness and the bonds of iniquity”—appears three times. Not only did Joseph use these phrases, he used them repeatedly. But, there is no reason to believe that the Nephites would have been familiar with a phrase that probably originated with Luke, and was never used by another biblical author. The simplest explanation of the frequency is that the writer had heard the phrase before. Although the allegedly ancient *BM* authors would not have had access to the *NT*, Joseph Smith did, making him a more likely author.

^f *Book of Mormon*, Mormon 9:32

The following comparison has the same basic problem:

3). “when he shall appear, we shall be like him, for we shall see him as he is”

1 John 3:2

Beloved, now are we the sons of God, and it doth not yet appear what we shall be; but we know that, **when he shall appear, we shall be like him; for we shall see him as he is.**

Moroni 7:48

...that ye may become the sons of God; that **when he shall appear we shall be like him, for we shall see him as he is**; that we may have this hope; that we may be purified even as he is pure. Amen.

John’s statement is a very powerful one, and many theologians have struggled to understand its meaning. In any case, it only occurred once in all of John’s writings, and never in any other biblical text. But, it is quoted word for word in the *Book of Mormon*. For me, the easiest way to explain this is Joseph’s familiarity with the *Bible*.

This next comparison is not an exact quote:

4). **It is better to sacrifice one man than for a to nation perish.**

John 11:50

Nor consider that it is expedient for us, that **one man should** die for the people, and that the whole **nation perish** not.

1 Nephi 4:13

...It is better that **one man should** perish than that a **nation** should dwindle and **perish** in unbelief.

The teaching is basically the same, although the context differs: it is better to sacrifice one man than a nation. There are also interesting parallels in the words chosen. Both use the phrase “one man should,” and both speak of a nation “perish[ing].” In reality, the word “perish” makes much more sense in John. How exactly does a nation “perish in unbelief”? Normally, this figurative use of the word “perish” would not be troubling. But, when one learns that it is found in a closely paralleled biblical text, it becomes suspect. In reality, the *NT* quote refers to the selfless sacrifice of Christ, whereas the *BM* reference applies to a directive of murder in order to obtain the scriptures. It is easy to see, however, how someone familiar with the logic of sacrifice explained in *John* might have imagined this *BM* text.

In this following comparison, there are strong wording and connotation similarities:

5). “**Now I know of a surety that the Lord hath...delivered...out of the hand(s) of...**”

(also see 1 Nephi 17:55, Mosiah 7:14, Alma 32:26)

Acts 12:11

And when Peter was come to himself, he said, **Now I know of a surety, that the Lord hath** sent his angel, and hath **delivered** me **out of the hand of** Herod, and from all the expectation of the people of the Jews.

1 Nephi 5:8

And she spake, saying: **Now I know of a surety that the Lord hath** commanded my husband to flee into the wilderness; yea, and **I also know of a surety that the Lord hath** protected my sons, and **delivered** them **out of the hands of** Laban, and given them power whereby they could accomplish the thing which the Lord hath commanded them.

Although used in slightly different contexts (in one case, the person refers to himself, and in the other a mother refers to her sons), the word choice is practically identical. The phrase “know of a surety” only appears once in the *KJV*. Not too surprisingly, it shows up four times in the *Book of Mormon*. In the case of 1 Nephi 5:8, no fewer than 16 words match (the pluralizing of *hand* is the only difference). How can one explain these problems without admitting that Joseph Smith was familiar with biblical texts? If any attempt was made to retain the original meaning of the *BM* texts, it seems unreasonable to believe a true translation would render a text with such undeniable similarity to the *KJV*.

I believe this next parallel is a direct result of Joseph Smith overusing a rare biblical phrase:

6). Nations, kindreds, tongues and people.

(also see 2 Nephi 30:8, Mosiah 27:25, 3 Nephi 28:29)

Revelation 7:9

After this I beheld, and, lo, a great multitude, which no man could number, of all **nations**, and **kindreds**, and **people**, and **tongues**, stood before the throne, and before the Lamb, clothed with white robes, and palms in their hands;

1 Nephi 5:18

That these plates of brass should go forth unto all **nations**, **kindreds**, **tongues**, and **people** who were of his seed.

1 Nephi 11:36

And the angel of the Lord spake unto me again, saying: Thus shall be the destruction of all **nations**, **kindreds**, **tongues**, and **people**, that shall fight against the twelve apostles of the Lamb.

1 Nephi 14:11

And it came to pass that I looked and beheld the whore of all the earth, and she sat upon many waters; and she had dominion over all the earth, among all **nations**, **kindreds**, **tongues**, and **people**.

1 Nephi 22:28

But, behold, all **nations, kindreds, tongues, and people** shall dwell safely in the Holy One of Israel if it so be that they will repent.

This phrase occurs twice in the *Bible*, both times in *Revelations*. Thus, one could infer that it was part of the style of John. But, it (and variants) occur no less than seven times in the *Book of Mormon*. Admittedly, the words *people* and *tongues* were inverted in the *BM*, but I find this difference minimal. It also occurs over 15 times in the *HOTC*, four times in the *D&C* (there is some overlap between the *HOTC* and *D&C*), and over sixty times in the *Journal of Discourses*. The truth is that the phrase simply means “everyone” in the sense that Smith used it. Why did he feel obligated to use this longer phrase (which appears to have originated with John)? I believe he did it because it made the book sound more “biblical.” If this was his intention, it was successful; however, I feel that these “biblical” phrases now belie the true origin of the *Book of Mormon*.

The following reveals another phrase that the *BM* (or Joseph Smith) and John had in common:

7). Blinding the eyes, hardening the hearts.

John 12:40

He hath **blinded** their **eyes**, and **hardened** their **heart**; that they should not see with their eyes, nor understand with their heart, and be converted, and I should heal them.

1 Nephi 12:17

And the mists of darkness are the temptations of the devil, which **blindeth** the **eyes**, and **hardeneth** the **hearts** of the children of men, and leadeth them away into broad roads, that they perish and are lost.

1 Nephi 13:27

And all this have they done that they might pervert the right ways of the Lord, that they might **blind** the **eyes** and **harden** the **hearts** of the children of men.

Mosiah 11:29

Now the **eyes** of the people were **blinded**; therefore they **hardened** their **hearts** against the words of Abinadi, and they sought from that time forward to take him. And king Noah hardened his heart against the word of the Lord, and he did not repent of his evil doings.

The idea of “hardening hearts” is very common in the *O.T.* and occurs a few times in the *N.T.* However, the phrase is grouped with “blinding eyes” only once, and that is in *John*. On the other hand, this grouping occurs three times in the *Book of Mormon*. In every case, it is dated before John’s time. So, where did the ancient authors get the idea to use John’s words? Or, did John and these *BM* authors develop the phrase independently? Or, did the author live after John, and simply paraphrase him; was the author Joseph Smith?

I feel that it is extremely probable that Joseph Smith authored the second of the following two phrases, due to his familiarity with the first:

8). God gives “liberally” to those who ask.

James 1:5

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.

2 Nephi 4:35

Yea, I know that **God** will **give liberally** to **him** that **asketh**. ...
[Who knew this—Joseph Smith or Nephi?]

In this, we find what was probably Joseph Smith’s favorite scripture: James 1:5.^g However, long before James’ time, Nephi apparently used very similar wording. The author of 2 Nephi 4:35 knew what Joseph Smith “knew” when he was 14, according to his own story. It requires no stretch of the imagination to think that Joseph Smith would have made the statement attributed to Nephi. I find that it requires a huge stretch of the imagination to think that Nephi would have essentially quoted James before his time.

As I explained earlier, 1 Corinthians 15 is an interesting chapter for me. Thus, I was not surprised to find further *BM* sections that appear to have been derived from this chapter:

9). **Mortal puts on immortality, corrupt[ion] puts on incorruption, resurrection.**

(see also 2 Nephi 2:11, Alma 5:15)

1 Corinthians 15:42,53

So also is the **resurrection** of the dead. It is sown in **corruption**; it is raised in **incorruption**:

For this **corruptible** must **put on incorruption**, and this **mortal** must **put on immortality**.

Mosiah 16:10

Even this **mortal** shall **put on immortality**, and this **corruption** shall **put on incorruption**, and shall be brought to stand before the bar of God, to be judged of him according to their works whether they be good or whether they be evil

Alma 40:2

Behold, I say unto you, that there is no **resurrection**—or, I would say, in other words, that this **mortal** does not **put on immortality**, this **corruption** does not **put on incorruption**—until after the coming of Christ.

The words “corruption” and “incorruption” occur in the same verse only twice in the entire *KJV*. Both occurrences are in 1 Corinthians 15. But, in the *Book of Mormon*, they occur together four times. The phrases “put on incorruption” and “put on immortality” also only occur twice in the *KJV*, both in 1 Corinthians 15. But, they occur in two separate chapters in the *Book of Mormon*. Once again, a single author of the *Bible* used these phrases, and then only in one chapter. But, for *Book of Mormon* authors, these were well known phrases—all hundreds

^g Joseph Smith, *History of the Church*, Volume 1, 4

of years before the phrase was first used by Paul. Once again, the simplest explanation seems to be that Joseph Smith wrote the *BM* phrases due to his familiarity with the *Bible*.

The following exposes an almost exact copy of the text from *Romans*:

10). “to be carnally minded is death...to be spiritually minded is life”

Romans 8:6

For to be carnally minded is death; but to be spiritually minded is life and peace.

2 Nephi 9:39 (As printed in the original, 1830 edition)

O, my beloved brethren, remember the awfulness in transgressing against that holy God, and also the awfulness of yielding to the enticing of that cunning one. Remember, **to be carnally minded, is death, and to be spiritually minded, is life** eternal.

The only difference is the use of conjunctions (*and* vs. *but*). In this case, I quoted the original printing, because in later editions, there are a couple more trivial differences. Nephi said, “Remember...” and proceeded to quote Romans 8:6. It truly seems that the author of 2 Nephi 9:39 had previously read the scripture in *Romans*. Why else would he have reminded his readers of the teaching? Of course, he couldn’t have known about the unique scripture in *Romans*, unless the book was written *after* the *KJV*. Once again, I find the more likely author to be Joseph Smith.

The following comparison marks another common passage of the *BM* that appears to originate with the *KJV*:

11). **Be steadfast, unmovable, “always abounding in...work(s).”**

(see also 1 Nephi 2:10, Alma 1:25, 3 Nephi 6:14, Ether 12:4, Alma 7:24)

1 Corinthians 15:58

Therefore, my beloved brethren, be ye **stedfast, unmoveable, always abounding in the work** of the Lord, forasmuch as ye know that your labour is not in vain in the Lord.

Mosiah 5:15

Therefore, I would that ye should be **steadfast and immovable, always abounding in good works**, that Christ, the Lord God Omnipotent, may seal you his, that you may be brought to heaven, that ye may have everlasting salvation and eternal life, through the wisdom, and power, and justice, and mercy of him who created all things, in heaven and in earth, who is God above all. Amen.

The author of *Mosiah* seemed to be aware of the wording of 1 Corinthians 15:58. It is no surprise that this phrase is unique (in the *Bible*) to this single verse; in fact the words “stedfast” and “unmovable” occur together in the *Bible* only once. However, they occur together in six different verses in the *Book of Mormon*. The phrase in *Mosiah* is practically identical, with the only differences being slight spelling changes, and a replacement of “work of the Lord” with “good works.”

In this next similarity, an exact phrase from *James* appears in the *Book of Mormon* many years before it’s authoring:

12). “these things ought not so to be”

James 3:10

Out of the same mouth proceedeth blessing and cursing. My brethren, **these things ought not so to be.**

Alma 16:18

Now those priests who did go forth among the people did preach against all lyings, and deceivings, and envyings, and strifes, and malice, and revilings, and stealing, robbing, plundering, murdering, committing adultery, and all manner of lasciviousness, crying that **these things ought not so to be.**

Although it is possible these two phrases were written independently, both occur only once in their respective books. The *BM* also contains a slight variation: “these things ought not to be,” which occurs 3 more times. My personal feeling is that all of these were derived from the singular phrase in the *KJV*, probably because Joseph Smith inadvertently assimilated it into his ideas of “biblical” phraseology.

As I noted in the beginning of this section, I became perturbed when I noticed the similarities between *1 Corinthians* and *Mosiah*. Many phrases from three consecutive verses of the *Bible* were used three different times in the *Book of Mormon*:

13). “the sting of death,” “grave...victory,” “death [be] swallowed up”

1 Corinthians 15:54–56

So when this corruptible shall have put on incorruption, and this mortal shall have put on immortality, then shall be brought to pass the saying that is written, **Death is swallowed up in victory.**

O **death**, where is thy **sting**? O **grave**, where is thy **victory**?

The sting of death is sin; and the strength of sin is the law.

Mosiah 16:8

But there is a resurrection, therefore the **grave** hath no **victory**, and **the sting of death is swallowed up** in Christ.

Alma 22:14

And since man had fallen he could not merit anything of himself; but the sufferings and death of Christ atone for their sins, through faith and repentance, and so forth; and that he breaketh the bands of death, that the **grave** shall have no **victory**, and that **the sting of death** should **be swallowed up in** the hopes of glory; and Aaron did expound all these things unto the king.

Mormon 7:5

Know ye that ye must come to the knowledge of your fathers, and repent of all your sins and iniquities, and believe in Jesus Christ, that he is the Son of God, and that he was slain by the Jews, and by the power of the Father he hath risen again, whereby he hath gained the **victory** over the **grave**; and also in him is **the sting of death swallowed up.**

As I noted before, Mosiah 16:8 specifically seems to be answering the questions in verses 55 and 56. However, all contain the phrases “sting of death,” “swallowed up,” “grave,”

and “victory.” Not surprisingly, there are no other parallels in the *Bible*. However, this wording seemed to be very familiar to the *Book of Mormon* author(s). Again, what is more likely—four prophets independently creating the same wording, or one person borrowing from a book he knew very, very well?

The following is an example of an extended phrase that occurs only once in the *Bible*, but occurs twice (using exactly the same words) in the *Book of Mormon*:

14). “being grieved for the hardness of their hearts.”

(see also 1 Nephi 2:18, 1 Nephi 15:4, Alma 30:46)

Mark 3:5

And when he had looked round about on them with anger, **being grieved for the hardness of their hearts**, he saith unto the man, Stretch forth thine hand. And he stretched it out: and his hand was restored whole as the other.

1 Nephi 7:8

And now I, Nephi, **being grieved for the hardness of their hearts**, therefore I spake unto them....

3 Nephi 7:16

Therefore, **being grieved for the hardness of their hearts** and the blindness of their minds—went forth among them in that same year, and began to testify, boldly, repentance and remission of sins through faith on the Lord Jesus Christ.

In addition to these quoted comparisons, slight variations (none of which occur in the *Bible*), appear three more times in the *Book of Mormon*. I honestly find it very unlikely that such a phenomenon can easily be explained, unless the writer of the *BM* had previously read the *NT*.

Up to this time, I have not included any of the scriptures from the nearly identical chapters of the *Bible*. I have already taken these into account, and there would be no point in going over the hundreds of verses. I mention the following comparison as an exception to the rule:

15). “it came to pass...when Jesus had ended these sayings”

Matthew 7:28-29

And **it came to pass, when Jesus had ended these sayings**, the people were astonished at his doctrine:

For he taught them as one having authority, and not as the scribes.

3 Nephi 15:1

AND now **it came to pass** that **when Jesus had ended these sayings** he cast his eyes round about on the multitude....

It is interesting to note that the last two verses of Matthew 7 were omitted (probably because they refer to scribes, an obvious reference to biblical Jews) when 3 Nephi 15 was written. Therefore, this phrase appears in the next chapter of 3 Nephi. As I mentioned previously, the explanation for the exact parallels in these chapters is that, in both cases, Jesus preached the same sermon.

The problem is that this verse does not contain any words of Jesus. Therefore, these are the words of the narrator, both in Matthew, and 3 Nephi. Why did this narrator choose to use the exact same phrase as Matthew? Even if the same person (Jesus) was giving the sermon, certainly it could not have been the same narrator who recorded the event. What does seem likely is that Joseph Smith copied this entire section from the *KJV*, removed the reference to the scribes, but still used part of the verse he had to delete. This is the same kind of thing I believe he did in the *JST*. How else can one explain that the narrator of 3 Nephi chose to quote Matthew's narration of the Sermon on the Mount?

There are numerous parallels between Moroni 10 and 1 Corinthians 12. The similarities are easy to spot, and most Mormons already know about them. Both contain a list of spiritual gifts that parallel each other in wording and description. For example, Moroni 10 contains the following phrase: "And to another, exceedingly great faith; and to another, the gifts of healing by the same Spirit..." 1 Corinthians 12 contains this phrase, "To another faith by the same Spirit; to another the gifts of healing by the same Spirit." Both chapters contain the phrase, "but it is the same God which worketh all in all" (*who* replaced *which* after the 1830 *Book of Mormon*). There are many more strong similarities between the two chapters, but they are too many to list.

This comparison shows that Moroni 7 contains a condensed version of 1 Corinthians 13:2-8:

19). Teachings on Charity

Moroni 7:44-47

If so, his faith and hope is vain, for none is acceptable before God, save the meek and lowly in heart; and if a man be meek and lowly in heart, and confesses by the power of the Holy Ghost that Jesus is the Christ, he must needs have charity; for if he **have not charity** he is **nothing**; wherefore he must needs have charity.

And **charity suffereth long, and is kind, and envieth not, and is not puffed up, seeketh not her own, is not easily provoked, thinketh no evil, and rejoiceth not in iniquity but rejoiceth in the truth, beareth all things, believeth all things, hopeth all things, endureth all things.**

Wherefore, my beloved brethren, if ye **have not charity**, ye are **nothing**, for **charity never faileth**. Wherefore, cleave unto charity, which is the greatest of all, for all things must fail—

But charity is the pure love of Christ, and it endureth forever; and whoso is found possessed of it at the last day, it shall be well with him.

1 Corinthians 13:2-8

And though I have the gift of prophecy, and understand all mysteries, and all knowledge; and though I have all faith, so that I could remove mountains, and **have not charity, I am nothing.**

And though I bestow all my goods to feed the poor, and though I give my body to be burned, and have not charity, it profiteth me nothing.

Charity suffereth long, and is kind; charity envieth not; charity vaunteth not itself, is not puffed up,

Doth not behave itself unseemly, **seeketh not her own, is not easily provoked, thinketh no evil;**

Rejoiceth not in iniquity, but rejoiceth in the truth;

Beareth all things, believeth all things, hopeth all things, endureth all things.

Charity never faileth: but whether there be prophecies, they shall fail; whether there be tongues, they shall cease; whether there be knowledge, it shall vanish away.

The same teachings, in the same words, were taught in both. Again, the amount of identical material is extensive, and is not worth examining in detail. However, it is more evidence of the amount of material that I feel comes directly from the *KJV*. I feel that there is no good explanation for this except that the author of the *BM* copied this text from the *KJV*. Even if it is maintained that both ancient authors wrote the same teachings, that so many phrases would be translated identically into English defies reason.

The list of comparisons above is far from exhaustive. There are thousands of verses in the *Book of Mormon* that contain biblical phrases.^h Because of this, it should be clear that the identical wording goes much deeper than the 25 admitted chapters that are near exact copies.

In addition to very similar wording, a trend has begun to emerge. Joseph Smith appears to have found phrases in the *Bible*, and then used them repeatedly. He did this to the point that phrases unique to one author (and often one chapter or verse) became commonplace in the *BM*. The phrase “Lamb of God” is unique (in the *Bible*) to the first chapter of *John* (it is used twice). But, it occurs 33 times in the *BM*. The phrase “exceeding wrath” appears once in the *Bible*. It appears seven times in the 1830 *BM* (*exceeding* was changed to *exceedingly* in later editions). The phrase “my beloved brethren” occurs five times in the *Bible*, every time in an epistle of Paul (where it makes sense). It occurs no less than 60 times in the *BM*, but it rarely (if ever) has anything to do with an epistle. The phrase “yesterday, today and forever” occurs once in the *Bible* (Hebrews), but seven times in the *BM*. “Tidings of great joy” appears once in the *Bible* (Luke), but four times in the *BM*. The phrase “perfect knowledge” only appears in Acts 24, but can be found 12 times in the *BM*. “Knowledge of the truth” appears three times in the *Bible* (twice in *Timothy* and once in *Hebrews*), but occurs 15 times in the *BM*. “Grievous to be borne” is a phrase unique to two of the gospels (both times referring to Pharisees), but appears five times in the *BM*. The words, “Mysteries of God,” only turn up in *Corinthians*, but are in the *BM* eight times. There are many more such phrases, but these are sufficient to make the point.

The fact that so much of the *BM* parallels wording from the *KJV* is suspicious. Why would someone who had the “gift of translation” need to rely so heavily on a 2-century old translation of the *Bible*? There is no easy way to explain the similarities without admitting that Smith used the *KJV*. It is even more problematic to find that Smith used unique phrases from the *KJV* several times in the *BM*. If this practice is as pervasive as it seems to be, much of the *BM* is not only largely taken from the *Bible*, it is taken from a very small subset of the *KJV*.

^h Tanner, *Joseph Smith's Plagiarism of the Bible*, 1-290

Thus, many of the wordings (and thus teachings) in the *BM* are taken from a small part of the *Bible* and used repeatedly. Anyone who has listened to many Protestant sermons realizes the same thing is true of them—they choose a few points from the *Bible* and make them over and over, frequently quoting and paraphrasing. In the *BM*, however, this makes it hard to believe it is truly ancient.

Anyone who has read the *BM* should realize that it is extremely repetitious. What is surprising is that much of what is repeated comes directly from the *Bible*. With this and the 25 copied chapters in mind, the 531 page book begins to seem less and less impressive. In my opinion, an “inspired translation” should not need to rely so heavily on one imperfect translation of the *Bible*. There was no need to cast the text into Elizabethan English, unless the reason was to make it sound biblical or ancient. There was no need to borrow significant phrases from biblical authors, unless the author could not think of any inspiring expressions of his own. In short, the presence of all this material suggests to me that the author was bereft of original ideas.

2). Are *Book of Mormon* stories inspired by biblical stories?

The *Book of Mormon* contains many stories that are similar in idea to *Bible* stories. I feel that Joseph Smith used many of these stories as “filler” material for *BM* history. In contrast to the previous section, I am not suggesting that every one of these parallels is strong. Certainly, similarities in story can happen by coincidence more easily than identical wording. In spite of this, I feel that the parallels made here are fairly good, and are strong possibilities for the source of certain *BM* material.

The first parallel is between Noah’s ark, Nephi’s ships, and the Jaredite barges:

1). Building ships.

Genesis 6:14–16

Make thee an ark of gopher wood; rooms shalt thou make in the ark, and shalt pitch it within and without with pitch.

1 Nephi 17:8

And it came to pass that the Lord spake unto me, saying: Thou shalt construct a ship, after the manner which I shall show thee, that I may carry thy people across these waters.

Ether 2:16

And the Lord said: Go to work and build, after the manner of barges which ye have hitherto built. And it came to pass that the brother of Jared did go to work, and also his brethren, and built barges after the manner which they had built, according to the instructions of the Lord. And they were small, and they were light upon the water, even like unto the lightness of a fowl upon the water.

In every case, God commanded the building of the ship, and gave instructions on how to build it. Additionally, the Jaredites brought “male and female” of every kind of animal, just as Noah did. In the case of Noah, this made sense, since he was to repopulate the world with the creatures he brought. The Jaredites, on the other hand, would have only needed supplies for the voyage; they would not have needed every kind of animal—presumably, there would have been sufficient in America. In any case, the story of Noah’s ark could have inspired these stories.

The following stories contain some parallels in, as well:

2). Prophets surrounded by fire.

Daniel 3:23-25

And these three men, Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego, fell down bound into the midst of the burning fiery furnace.

Then Nebuchadnezzar the king was astonished, and rose up in haste, and spake, and said unto his counsellors, Did not we cast three men bound into the midst of the fire? They answered and said unto the king, True, O king.

He answered and said, Lo, I see four men loose, walking in the midst of the fire, and they have no hurt; and the form of the fourth is like the Son of God.

Helaman 5:22-25

And after they had been cast into prison many days without food, behold, they went forth into the prison to take them that they might slay them.

And it came to pass that Nephi and Lehi were encircled about as if by fire, even insomuch that they durst not lay their hands upon them for fear lest they should be burned. Nevertheless, Nephi and Lehi were not burned; and they were as standing in the midst of fire and were not burned.

And when they saw that they were encircled about with a pillar of fire, and that it burned them not, their hearts did take courage.

For they saw that the Lamanites durst not lay their hands upon them; neither durst they come near unto them, but stood as if they were struck dumb with amazement.

In both cases a group of prophets was involved, and got into trouble. In one case, the prophets were cast into prison, and in another case they were thrown into a fire. In both cases the men were eventually surrounded by fire, but not hurt. In *Daniel*, a heavenly being was seen walking with the prophets. In Helaman (in another part of the chapter), the prophets were seen talking to angels. In both cases, everyone who saw was amazed (understandably). Again, this *Bible* story might easily have inspired the much of the *Book of Mormon* version.

The same chapter of the *Book of Mormon* has strong resemblances to another biblical story: Acts 16, where Paul and Silas were put in prison for preaching (after successfully baptizing converts), they prayed, and the prison shook (but did not fall) and the doors opened. The keeper of the prison was then converted and baptized, after which Paul and Silas were freed. In Helaman 5, Nephi and Lehi were put in prison after preaching in Zarahemla and baptizing several converts. After the previously mentioned incident with fire, the prison shook (but did not fall). After being frozen in place for a period, the Lamanites guards were converted and commanded to preach the gospel (Nephi and Lehi obviously went free). So, the parallels are: prophets are thrown into prison after preaching and baptizing; the prison shakes; the keeper(s) of the prison see, are amazed and converted; the prophets go free. Again, these are striking parallels.

It would take no great imagination to combine these two *Bible* stories (involving hardships endured by prophets) and create a chapter like Helaman 5. Obviously, the *Book of Mormon* version involved many more people than either account from the *Bible*, but it is easy to embellish a story. In fact, the next comparison is a good example of a possible exaggeration of a *Bible* story:

3). Hands thrust into Christ's wounds.

John 20:27

Then saith he to Thomas, Reach hither thy finger, and behold my hands; and reach hither thy **hand**, and **thrust it into my side**: and be not faithless, but believing.

3 Nephi 11:14-15

Arise and come forth unto me, that ye may **thrust** your **hands into my side**, and also that ye may feel the prints of the nails in my hands and in my feet, that ye may know that I am the God of Israel, and the God of the whole earth, and have been slain for the sins of the world.

And it came to pass that the multitude went forth, and thrust their hands into his side, and did feel the prints of the nails in his hands and in his feet; and this they did do, going forth one by one until they had all gone forth, and did see with their eyes and did feel with their hands, and did know of a surety and did bear record, that it was he, of whom it was written by the prophets, that should come.

This is an obvious parallel, but the *Book of Mormon* version is amazingly expanded. In the *N.T.*, Christ allowed one person to touch his scars, but in the *BM*, an entire multitude was allowed to touch him. Not only would this have taken an extremely long time, it seems pointless. The entire Nephite nation had just suffered natural disasters followed by three days of darkness, after which Jesus talked to them (in a loud voice) for a period of time. He then descended from Heaven while they all watched. If they did not believe he was Christ by then, they were more doubting than Thomas ever was. I feel that it is quite likely Joseph simply embellished the bible story, especially since he used such similar wording.

There are several strong similarities in the following story:

4). Interpreting the writing on the wall, written by a finger.

Daniel 5:5,7

In the same hour came forth fingers of a man's hand, and wrote over against the candlestick upon the plaister of the wall of the king's palace: and the king saw the part of the hand that wrote.

...

Then Daniel answered and said before the king, Let thy gifts be to thyself, and give thy rewards to another; yet I will read the writing unto the king, and make known to him the interpretation.

Alma 10:2

I am Amulek; I am the son of Giddonah, who was the son of Ishmael, who was a descendant of Aminadi; and it was the same Aminadi who interpreted the writing which was upon the wall of the temple, which was written by the finger of God.

The story in *Daniel* explains that “fingers came forth” and wrote a message on the wall. Although it is not stated, it would be easy to come to the conclusion that the fingers belonged to God. Daniel was able to interpret this writing for the king. Aminadi, a *BM* prophet, also interpreted writing that was written by God’s finger on the wall. So, in both cases a message was written on the wall with a finger, and was then interpreted by a prophet. I find this to be a good possible source for the verse in *Alma*.

These two stories are practically identical, insofar as the context would permit:

5). **Dancing daughter used to obtain a head for their parent.**

Matthew 14:6-10

But when Herod's birthday was kept, the **daughter of Herodias danced before** them, and **pleased** Herod.

Whereupon he promised with an oath to give her whatsoever she would ask.

And she, being before instructed of her mother, said, **Give me here John**

Baptist's head in a charger.

And the king was sorry: nevertheless for the oath's sake, and them which sat with him at meat, he commanded it to be given her.

And he sent, and beheaded John in the prison.

Ether 8

And now Omer was a friend to Akish; wherefore, when Jared had sent for Akish, the **daughter of Jared danced before** him that she **pleased** him, insomuch that he desired her to wife. And it came to pass that he said unto Jared: Give her unto me to wife.

And Jared said unto him: I will give her unto you, if ye will **bring unto me the head** of my father, the king.

In both cases, a daughter danced before someone and “pleased” him. In both cases, the result was that the parent was able to bargain for something he/she wanted. In both cases, what the parent wanted was the head of another person. Finally, in both cases, that person was decapitated. These resemblances cannot be honestly ignored. Although it is possible that a similar event could have happened in two different societies, and even have been recorded, the likelihood that both would use such similar wording (“daughter of [name] danced before him/them ... pleased [him]”) leaves little room for doubt in my mind that the *BM* story had its origin in the *KJV*.

The following contains only a few similarities, but they are indisputable:

6) **Kidnapping the dancing daughters.**

Judges 21:20-23

Therefore they commanded the children of Benjamin, saying, Go and lie in wait in the vineyards;

And see, and, behold, if the daughters of Shiloh come out to dance in dances, then come ye out of the vineyards, and catch you every man his wife of the daughters of Shiloh, and go to the land of Benjamin.

And it shall be, when their fathers or their brethren come unto us to complain, that we will say unto them, Be favourable unto them for our sakes: because we reserved not to each man his wife in the war: for ye did not give unto them at this time, that ye should be guilty.

And the children of Benjamin did so, and took them wives, according to their number, of them that danced, whom they caught: and they went and returned unto their inheritance, and repaired the cities, and dwelt in them.

Mosiah 20:1,4-5

NOW there was a place in Shemlon where the daughters of the Lamanites did gather themselves together to sing, and to dance, and to make themselves merry.

And having tarried in the wilderness, and having discovered the daughters of the Lamanites, they laid and watched them;

And when there were but few of them gathered together to dance, they came forth out of their secret places and took them and carried them into the wilderness; yea, twenty and four of the daughters of the Lamanites they carried into the wilderness.

In *Judges*, the story is about the daughters of Shiloh. In *Mosiah*, the story refers to the daughters of the Lamanites. In both cases, the daughters were out dancing alone. In both cases, the daughters were taken against their will, and were later made wives. Clearly, this could have resulted coincidentally. However, it would have been trivial to invent the story in *Mosiah* after having read that from *Judges*.

As is clear this comparison, Alma (the younger) and Saul/Paul had a lot in common:

7). Biggest enemy of the Church becomes its strongest advocate after spiritual experience.

Mosiah 27:10-13

And now it came to pass that while he [Alma] was going about to destroy the church of God, for he did go about secretly with the sons of Mosiah seeking to destroy the church, and to lead astray the people of the Lord, contrary to the commandments of God, or even the king—

And as I said unto you, as they were going about rebelling against God, behold, the angel of the Lord appeared unto them; and he descended as it were in a cloud; and he spake as it were with **a voice** of thunder, which caused the earth to shake upon which they stood;

And so great was their astonishment, that **they fell to the earth**, and understood not the words which he spake unto them.

Nevertheless he cried again, saying: **Alma**, arise and stand forth, for **why persecutest thou** the church of God? For the Lord hath said: This is my church, and I will establish it; and nothing shall overthrow it, save it is the transgression of my people.

Acts 26:11-14

And I punished them oft in every synagogue, and compelled them to blaspheme; and being exceedingly mad against them, I persecuted them even unto strange cities.

Whereupon as I went to Damascus with authority and commission from the chief priests,

At midday, O king, I saw in the way a light from heaven, above the brightness of the sun, shining round about me and them which journeyed with me.

And when **we were all fallen to the earth**, I heard **a voice** speaking unto me, and saying in the Hebrew tongue, Saul, **Saul, why persecutest thou** me? it is hard for thee to kick against the pricks.

Both Alma and Paul were serious problems for the Church, and actively opposed it. Miraculously, in both cases, a spiritual experience changed them forever. Afterwards, Alma would say he was “born of the Spirit,” and Saul would be baptized. They both became missionaries for the Church. I have only included the details of the spiritual experience above. In both cases, there was a dramatic spiritual event that affected everyone with them. In both

cases, everyone fell to the earth. In both cases, a heavenly message was delivered, and that message included the phrase, “why persecutest thou...” The phrase “why persecutest thou” occurs three times in the *Bible*, and in every case it is a direct reference to Paul’s experience. Again, the amazing similarity in the two experiences, accompanied by the fact that a unique three word phrase occurs in both, leads me to draw the conclusion that Smith simply copied the ideas and the wording from the *N.T.* account when writing the story of Alma.

The next two comparisons contain some similarities that should be interesting for Mormons. These quotes come from the *KJV* of the *Apocrypha*, which was commonly included with the rest of the *Bible* in Joseph Smith’s time. Joseph Smith knew about the *Apocrypha*, as demonstrated by his question as to whether it needed to be translated as part of the *JST*.ⁱ According to Reed Durham, Joseph Smith bought a *Bible* containing the *Apocrypha* in 1828, two years before the *BM* was published.^j In any case, the comparisons should leave little room for doubt that Joseph Smith had a copy of the *Apocrypha* when he wrote the *Book of Mormon*.

In the first comparison from the *Apocrypha*, there are some interesting parallels to the *BM* story about the brass plates:

8). Records written on brass tablets/plates, kept in treasury

1 Maccabees 14:18,48-49 (*Apocrypha*, *KJV*)

They wrote unto him in **tables of brass**....

...

So they commanded that **this writing** should be put in **tables of brass**, and that they should be set up within the compass of the sanctuary in a conspicuous place;

Also that the copies thereof should be laid up in the **treasury**, to the end that Simon and his sons might have them.

1 Nephi 4:16,20

And I also knew that the **law was engraven** upon the **plates of brass**.

And after I had done this, I went forth unto the treasury of Laban. And as I went forth towards the **treasury** of Laban, behold, I saw the servant of Laban who had the keys of the treasury. And I commanded him in the voice of Laban, that he should go with me into the treasury.

In both cases, writings were kept in a treasury. In both case, the writings were on/in brass tablets/plates. The phrase in *Maccabees* uses the word *tables* instead of *tablets*, but these are synonyms. In fact, in the *RSV*, this phrase was translated *bronze tablets* instead of *tables of brass*. Additionally, the phrase “plates of brass” shows up in Sirach 50:3 (another book of the *Apocrypha*), although the meaning is different. Together, these easily could have been Joseph Smith’s inspiration for the story about obtaining the “plates of brass” from Laban. It also is a possible source for the idea about the “gold plates.” I find this to be an excellent possibility for Joseph’s “inventive” ideas about writings contained on metal plates.

ⁱ Joseph Smith, *History of the Church*, Volume 1, 331

^j *A History of Joseph Smith’s Revision of the Bible*, 25, as cited in Tanner, *Salt Lake City Messenger* #89

The next comparison contains such strong likenesses that I immediately came to the conclusion that Joseph Smith copied both the basics of the story and much of the text:

9). Man lying down, and full of wine has his head chopped off with his own weapon.

Judith 13:2,6-8 (Apocrypha, KJV)

And Judith was left along in the tent, and Holofernes lying along upon his bed:
for he was filled with wine.

...

Then she came to the pillar of the bed, which was at Holofernes' head, and took down **his fauchion** [scimitar] from thence,

And approached to his bed, and **took** hold of **the hair of his head**, and said, Strengthen me, O Lord God of Israel, this day.

And she **smote** twice upon his neck with all her might, and she took away **his head** from him.

1 Nephi 4:7,18

Nevertheless I went forth, and as I came near unto the house of Laban I beheld a man, and he had fallen to the earth before me, **for he was drunken with wine.**

...

Therefore I did obey the voice of the Spirit, and **took** Laban by **the hair of the head**, and I **smote** off **his head** with **his own sword**.

The list of likenesses is extensive: (1) both Judith and Nephi found someone lying down; (2) the person lying down was drunk, and the phrase used to describe it was “for he was _____ with wine,” in both cases; (3) both Judith and Nephi took the weapon belonging to the man, and in both cases it was some kind of sword; (4) both Judith and Nephi grabbed the person by the hair, and in both cases the phrase used was, “took...the hair of his/the head”; (5) Nephi was commanded by the Spirit to kill the person, and Judith prayed for support in killing the person; (6) both Judith and Nephi cut off the person’s head, and used the word “smote” (meaning strike) to describe their action. It is worth noting that the word “smote” was used correctly in *Judith* (she struck his neck), while being used incorrectly in the *BM* (Nephi did not strike the head off, he cut it off—to strike a head off implies knocking it off, perhaps with a club). With this large list of similarities, and the very similar wording of parts of the story, does it seem possible that this is just a coincidence? I feel that it defies reason to maintain that the *BM* is of ancient origin in the face of this one parallel.

In fact, the *Apocrypha* contains many similarities to the first part of the *BM*. Since Smith clearly had access to this book, it is evidence against his gift of translation, in my opinion. Jerald and Sandra Tanner made a list of 32 parallels between the *Apocrypha* and the *BM*.^k After reading them, I found it undeniable: Smith must have used the *Apocrypha* to create stories for the *BM*. There are also other interesting things in the *Apocrypha*. The word “Nephi” is the last word in chapter 1 of *2 Maccabees*, and it is capitalized as if it were a name, although it does not appear to be a proper name (it means “cleansing” according to the text). Since it is the last word of the chapter, someone scanning the text would be less likely to overlook it. I believe that Joseph Smith did exactly this and used it as the name of the main character in the *BM*. The word “Laban” also occurs in Judith 8:26, another part of the *Apocrypha* (it is also found in *Genesis* several times). The phrase “make an abridgement,” which occurs nowhere in the regular *Bible* and once in the *BM* (1 Nephi 1:17), shows up in *2 Maccabees* 2:31.

^k Tanner, *Salt Lake City Messenger* #89, Dec. 1995

I believe that anyone who objectively looks at these parallels from the *Apocrypha* should conclude that Joseph Smith did not just use phrases from the *Bible*; he recreated stories and took ideas from these works to create the *BM*. How else can one explain the similarities? What is the likelihood that Smith, while translating an ancient record, would remember and use phrases from the *KJV* that came from stories that strongly paralleled the exact portion he was translating? I am sure it is small, but the other possibility is much easier to believe: Smith copied the ideas of the stories, and (intentionally or not) used phrases from the exact story he was copying.

In this section I have demonstrated further examples of very similar material from the *KJV* and the *BM*. It seems likely that, at least in some cases, Joseph Smith used stories from the *Bible* to come up with ideas for stories in the *BM*. Even the most tenuously related comparisons above are at least good possibilities for where Joseph got his “inspiration.” However, I find the sections from the *Apocrypha* to be the most likely origin of Joseph Smith’s early *BM* stories. In fact, I find this evidence to be the most devastating so far to the case for the authenticity of the *Book of Mormon*. I do not see how anyone could possibly explain away these obvious parallels.

3) Did *View of the Hebrews* give Joseph Smith ideas for the *Book of Mormon*?

In 1927, B.H. Roberts (church historian and Pres. of First Quorum of the Seventy) compiled "A Parallel" between *View of the Hebrews* and the *Book of Mormon* in an attempt to determine if *View of the Hebrews* was a possible source for the *Book of Mormon*. B.H. Roberts never made any official conclusions, although I believe the evidence shows he was losing faith in the *Book of Mormon*. However, his personal conclusions should be irrelevant, and whatever his belief, he compiled a list of 18 "parallels" (some are similarities, others are not) between the two books. Since *View of the Hebrews* was published in 1823, it could easily have been used as a source.

As my previous arguments demonstrate, I certainly do not think that *View of the Hebrews* was the *only* source for the *BM*. I also strongly doubt it was even the *primary* source. However, it contains some statements that certainly could have given Smith his ideas. The following are what I think are the significant excerpts from Roberts' comparisons. In some cases I summarized what was an otherwise lengthy comparison. The italics are all faithful to "A Parallel."

Book of Mormon: (4) *Origin of Am Indians*

It is often represented by Mormon speakers and writers, that the Book of Mormon was the first to represent the American Indians as descendants of the Hebrews: holding that the Book of Mormon is unique in this. The claim is sometimes still ignorantly made.

View of the Hebrews: (4) *Origin of Am Indians*

In his index to the "View of the Hebrews" (p. 10) Mr. Ethan Smith informs us that from page 114 to page 225 (111 pages) will be devoted "to promiscuous testimonies," to the main fact for which his book stands, viz. *the Hebrew origin of the American Indians*. He brings together a very long list of writers and published books to show that this view very generally obtained throughout New England. One hundred and eleven pages devoted to evidence alone of the fact of such Hebrew origin gives space for much proof. Referring to Adair's testimonies on the subject, the "View of the Hebrews" *lists twenty-three arguments to prove such origin*. (pp. 147-8)

Book of Mormon: (5) *The Hidden Book Revealed*

On finding of the Book of Mormon Joseph Smith states that the Angel Moroni said that there was a book deposited written upon gold plates giving an account of the former Inhabitants of this continent and the source whence they sprang-- -Convenient to the village of Manchester-- -stands a hill of considerable size-- -On the west side of the hill, not far from the top, under a stone of considerable size lay the plates, deposited in a stone box. This stone was thick and rounding in the middle on the upper side and thinner toward the edges, so that the middle part of it was visible above the ground, but the edge all around was covered with earth. Having removed the earth, I obtained a lever, which I got fixed under the edge of the stone, and with a little exertion raised it up.*-- -The box in which they (the plates) lay, was formed by laying stones together in some kind of cement. In the bottom of the box were hid two stones crossways of the box, and on these stones lay the plates and the other things with them.-- -I looked in, and there indeed did I behold the plates. (P.G.P. 89, 93)

View of the Hebrews: (5) *The Lost Book*

Dr. West of Stockbridge gave the following information: "An old Indian informed him that his fathers in this country had not long since had a book which they had for a long time preserved. But having lost the knowledge of reading it, they concluded it would be of no further use to them; and they buried it with an Indian chief." It was spoken of "as a matter of fact." (View of the Hebrews p. 223)

"Some readers have said: If the Indians are of the Tribes of Israel, some decisive evidence of that fact will ere long be exhibited. This may be the case. * * * * *Would evidence like the following be deemed as verging toward what would be satisfactory? *Suppose* a leading character in Israel - where ever they are-should be found to have in his possession some Biblical fragment of ancient Hebrew writing. This man dies and it is buried with him in such manner as to be long preserved. Some people afterwards removing that earth, discover this fragment, and ascertain that it is an article of ancient Israel. Would such an incident-- -be esteemed of weight! Something like this may probably have occurred in favor of our Indians being of Israel." (p. 217)

Finding the Pittsfield Parchment: (Hebrew). Mr. Merrick gave the following account: That in 1815, he was leveling some ground under and near an old wood-shed standing on a place of his, situated on Indian Hill (a place in Pittsfield so called, and lying, as the writer was afterwards informed, at some distance from the middle of the town where Mr. Merrick is now living)-- -he plowed and conveyed away old chips and earth. After the work was done he discovered near where the earth had been dug the deepest a kind of black strap about six inches in length-- -He found it was formed of pieces of thick raw hide-- -and in the fold it contained four folded leaves of old parchment. These leaves were of a dark yellow (suggesting gold color!) and contained some kind of writing. (they turned out to be Bible quotations) They were written in Hebrew with a pen, in plain and intelligible writing.

(Query: Could all this have supplied structural work for the Book of Mormon)

Book of Mormon: (7) *Urim & Thummim & Breast Plate*

"I looked in and there indeed did I behold the plates, the Urim and Thummim, and the Breast Plate as stated by the messenger (i.e. Moroni) P. of G.P. 53.

"With the records was found a curious instrument, which the ancients called "Urim & Thummim, which consisted of *two transparent stones set in the brim of a bow fastened to a breast plate.*

Through the medium of the Urim and Thummin I translated the record by the gift and power of God." (Wentworth Letter, History of the Church, Vol. 4, p. 537)

View of the Hebrews: (7) *Urim & Thummim & Breast Plate*

"The Indian Archimagus (the High Priest) officiates in making the supposed holy fire for the yearly atonement for sin, the Sagan (Waiter upon the High Priest) clothes him with a white Ephod, which is a waist-coast without sleeves. In resemblance of the Urim and Thummim, the American Archimagus wears *a breast plate made of a white conch shell, with two holes bored in the middle of it, through which he puts the ends of an otter skin strap, and fastens a buckhorn white button to the outside of each, as if in imitation of the precious stones of the Urim* (View of the Hebrews p. 150).

The dress of the High Priest of the Osage Indians: "His cap was very high.- -His robe was a buffalo skin decorated with various colored feathers.- -And he wore on his breast suspended from his neck a dressed beaver skin stretched on sticks, on which were painted various hieroglyphic figures in different colors. The Indians speak of similar characters being among other tribes. Here as in Mr. Adair's account is their High Priest and breast plate." (View of the Hebrews p.166)- -"The official dress of their High Priest, and his resemblance of the breast plate and other things," The "View of the Hebrews" urges as evidence of Hebrews origin. (p. 167)

Describing a buried chieftain in one of the Ohio Mounds:

"On the breast lay a piece of copper; also a curious stone five inches in length, two in breadth, with two perforations through it. Containing a string of sinews of some animal. On this string were many beads of ivory, or bone. The whole appeared to have been designed to wear upon the neck as a kind of breastplate. (View of the Hebrews p. 195)

Comparison (8) summarized:

The *Book of Mormon* refers to the use of Egyptian characters in the first chapter. Later it states that the Egyptian is "reformed."

View of the Hebrews hypothesizes that Mexican Indians had contact with Egyptian Hieroglyphics, and that their paintings were derived from them (but not exact copies). Roberts notes that this means their Egyptian was "altered."

Comparison (9) summarized:

The *Book of Mormon* explains why a civilization descended from the *Hebrews* was not civilized like the Hebrews: there were two factions—Lamanites and Nephites—the Lamanites were an uncivilized people, killed off the Nephites, and Joseph generally accepted them as the ancestors of the American Indians.

View of the Hebrews says the following (italics by Roberts):

It is highly probable that the more civilized part of the tribes of Israel after they settled in America *became wholly separated from the hunting and savage tribes of their brethren*; that the latter lost the knowledge of their having descended from the same family with themselves; *that the more civilized part continued for many centuries, that tremendous wars were frequent between them and their savage brethren until the former became extinct.*

Comparison (10) summarized:

Both deal with the destruction of Jerusalem.

Comparison (12) summarized:

Both quote extensively from Isaiah. Roberts asks why Nephi quoted so heavily (and only) from Isaiah, when he supposedly had the writings of so many other prophets on the plates of brass.

Comparison (18) summarized:

The *Book of Mormon* talks about Christ coming to America.
View of the Hebrews talks about Quetzalcotle as a possible “type of Christ.”

The above comparisons do not require much commenting, in my opinion. They do establish a very good possibility for where Joseph Smith got some of his ideas. The most significant parts of the parallels lie in the fact that *View of the Hebrews* suggests that the Indians are descendants of a Hebrew people, that they split into two factions (one civilized and one barbarous), and that the barbarous people destroyed the civilized people and are the ancestors of the Indians. Of additional significance is the idea of a “lost book” that Ethan Smith explained, together with the idea that this book might be buried somewhere; also mentioned is the idea that some kind of excavation is necessary to prove that the Indians are Israelites. Ethan Smith also referred to the Urim and Thummim and a breastplate, although this idea is easily found in the *Bible*. All of these things might easily have given Joseph Smith the motivation to invent a story about digging up an ancient record that proved the Indians were Israelites, and using a “Urim and Thummim” to translate this record.

There are some further evidences that Joseph Smith may have been familiar with *View of the Hebrews*. The phrase “curious workmanship” occurs once in *View of the Hebrews*, zero times in the *Bible*, but four times in the *Book of Mormon* (in one of these cases it is actually “so curious a workmanship”), and once in the testimony of the eight witnesses. Did Joseph pick up this phrase from Ethan Smith? The phrase “reckoning of time” occurs twice in *View of the Hebrews*, zero times in the *Bible*, once in the *Book of Mormon*, and seven times (with slight variations) in *Abraham*. Joseph Smith seems to have discovered this phrase as well, and used it freely. The phrase “spiritual death” never occurs in the *Bible*, as strange as that may seem for Mormons, but it does occur once in *View of the Hebrews*. This phrase occurs no less than eight times in the *Book of Mormon*! The words “rod of iron” occur once in *View of the Hebrews* but six times in the *Book of Mormon*.

As with the *Bible*, it would be fruitless to continue showing phrases that Joseph Smith probably imitated. Of course, it is possible that these are all coincidences. It is also possible that Ethan Smith used phrases like “spiritual death” because they had become commonplace by the time he wrote his book. If this is the case, it still implies that the phrases were from the wrong time period. At the very least, these comparisons should be helpful in demonstrating that Joseph Smith’s ideas were not original. At the worst, they suggest that *View of the Hebrews* was another source from which Joseph Smith plagiarized. In either case, it is clear that some of the most important claims of the *Book of Mormon* were suggested before it was ever published.

Prior to the printing of the *BM*, Ethan Smith wrote the following:

View of the Hebrews: 229, 247, 250

...that the aborigines of our continent are the descendants of the ten tribes of Israel, that we are the people especially addressed, and called upon to restore them; or **bring them to the knowledge of the gospel**, and to do with them whatever the God of Abraham designs shall be done.

...

Ho thou nation of the last days, shadowing with thy wings of liberty and peace; pity, instruct, and save my ancient people and brethren; especially that outcast branch of them, who were the **natives of your soil**. Pity that degraded **remnant** of a nation so terrible in ancient times, but who have been now so long wretched.

...

Go, thou nation highly distinguished in the last days; **save the remnant of my people**—Bring me a present of them "to the place of the name of the Lord of hosts, the Mount Zion."

Thus, Ethan Smith suggested that it was the duty of American Christians to go and reclaim the "remnant of [God's] people." He identifies these "aborigines" of America as the descendants of Israel, and says it is the mission of Christians to "bring them to the knowledge of the gospel."

There are some good indicators that Joseph Smith may have used this "mission" proclaimed by Ethan Smith as the justification for writing the *Book of Mormon*. In the Book of Mormon title page (which was allegedly part of the ancient writings¹), it states:

Wherefore, it is an abridgment of the record of the people of Nephi, and also of the Lamanites—Written to the Lamanites, who are a **remnant of the house of Israel**....

Which is to show unto the remnant of the House of Israel what great things the Lord hath done for their fathers; and **that they may know the covenants of the Lord**, that they are not cast off forever....

Thus, the title page identifies the Lamanites (American natives^m) as a "remnant" of Israel, and states that the mission of the *BM* is to teach the covenants of the Lord to this "remnant." In the first book of the *BM*, a prophet predicts the following:

...in the latter days, when our seed shall have dwindled in unbelief, yea, for the space of many years, and many generations after the Messiah shall be manifested in body unto the children of men, **then shall the fulness of the gospel of the Messiah come unto the Gentiles, and from the Gentiles unto the remnant of our seed**

And at that day shall **the remnant** of our seed know that they are of the house of Israel, and that they are the covenant people of the Lord; and then **shall they know and come** to the knowledge of their forefathers, and also **to the knowledge of the gospel** of their Redeemer, which was ministered unto their fathers by him; (1 Nephi 15:13-14)

In this prophecy, Nephi explained that the Gentiles (non-Jews, such as the American Christians) would receive the gospel, and pass it on to the "remnant." It explains that, through this, they would come "to the knowledge of the gospel." Interestingly, Ethan Smith had admonished the Americans to "bring them to the knowledge of the gospel."

¹ Joseph Smith, *Teachings*, 7

^m *History of the Church*, Volume 2, 357

Thus, both Joseph Smith and Ethan Smith considered the American natives a “remnant of” Israel, and considered it the responsibility of the Americans to bring them the gospel. Interestingly, both made use of the phrase “to the knowledge of the gospel,” to refer to the salvation of this “remnant.” In other words, the *Book of Mormon* claims to fulfill exactly what Ethan Smith predicted: knowledge of the gospel for the remnant of Israel, through non-Israelites. It is certainly possible that Joseph read *View of the Hebrews*, and set about to invent a book that would fulfill the prophecies that the “remnant” would be brought to know the gospel of Christ.

In Roberts’ comparison (5), he mentions the “Lost Book” identified by Ethan Smith. Ethan Smith also noted the following about the American natives:

Doctor Boudinot gives it as from good authority, that the Indians have a **tradition** "that the book which the white people have was once theirs. That while they had this book things went well with them; they prospered exceedingly; but that other people got it from them; that the Indians lost their credit; **offended the Great Spirit**, and suffered exceedingly from the neighboring nations; and that the Great Spirit then took pity on them, and **directed them to this country** (View of the Hebrews, 115).

Anyone who has read the *Book of Mormon* should remember a similar story. The Lamanites of the *Book of Mormon* claimed that the Nephites (the white people) had stolen the records:

They were a wild, and ferocious, and a blood-thirsty people, believing in the **tradition** of their fathers, which is this—Believing that they were **driven out of the land of Jerusalem because of the iniquities of their fathers**, and that they were wronged in the wilderness by their brethren, and they were also wronged while crossing the sea;

...

And again, they [the Lamanites] were wroth with him [Nephi] because he departed into the wilderness as the Lord had commanded him, and took the records which were engraven on the plates of brass, for they said that he robbed them. (Mosiah 10:12,16)

It is interesting that Ethan Smith identified this tradition in 1923. The same tradition shows up in the *Book of Mormon*, and is even referred to as a “tradition.” One obvious similarity is that, in both traditions, the natives were distressed that they had lost the book—the book that was now owned by the white people. Another similarity is that the natives believed they were directed to America after having sinned, or offended God. Once again, it is probable that Joseph Smith became aware of this tradition, and decided to incorporate its explanation and origin in the *Book of Mormon*.

Although there are several significant differences in Ethan Smith’s conclusions and the “history” found in the *Book of Mormon*, there are also some strong parallels. Certainly, it is not reasonable to expect Joseph Smith to have created a book that matched the details of *View of the Hebrews* perfectly. However, the book’s details, ideas, and scriptural arguments could easily have provided much of the foundation for *BM* history. It is of no small significance that both books claim the Native Americans to be descendants of the House of Israel, the more savage of those descendants, and destined to come back to the gospel through the Gentiles. In other words, this book could easily have given Joseph Smith the idea to write the *Book of Mormon*. For Joseph Smith, the best part of *The View of the Hebrews* may have been that it guaranteed at least one writer believed and argued the basic tenants of the *Book of Mormon*—if someone

challenged the historical plausibility of the *BM*, Joseph could have directed them to *View of the Hebrews*, which would have supported his case.

4) Did Joseph Smith use *A History of the American Indians* to create a believable history for the *Book of Mormon*?

1). *A History of the American Indians*, pp. 377-378

Through the whole continent, and in the remotest woods, are traces of their ancient warlike disposition. We frequently met with great **mounds of earth**, either of a **circular**, or oblong form, having a strong **breast-work** at a distance around them, made of the clay **which had been dug** up in forming **the ditch**, on the **inner side** of the inclosed [sic] ground, and these were their **forts of security** against an enemy. Three or four of them, are in some places raised so near to each other, as evidently for the garrison to take any enemy that passed between them. They were mostly built in low lands; and some are **overspread with large trees**, beyond the reach of Indian tradition. About 12 miles from the upper northern parts of the Choktah country, there stand on a level tract of land, the north-side of a creek, and within arrow-shot of it, two oblong mounds of earth, which were old garrisons, in an equal direction with each other, and about two arrow-shots apart. A broad **deep ditch inclosed** [sic] those two fortresses, and there they raised a high **breast-work**, to **secure their** houses **from** the invading **enemy**. This was a stupendous piece of work, for so small a number of savages, as could support themselves in it; their working instruments being only of stone and wood. They called those old fortresses *Nanne Yah*, “the hills, or mounts of God.”

2). Alma 48:8

Yea, he had been strengthening the armies of the Nephites, and erecting small forts, or places of resort; throwing up **banks of earth round about** to **enclose** his armies, and also building walls of stone to **encircle** them about, round about their cities and the borders of their lands; yea, all round about the land.

3). Alma 49:18

Now behold, the Lamanites could not get into their **forts of security** by any other way save by the entrance, because of the highness of the bank which had been thrown up, and the **depth of the ditch which had been dug** round about, save it were by the entrance.

4). Alma 53:3-4,10

And it came to pass that after the Lamanites had finished burying their dead and also the dead of the Nephites, they were marched back into the land Bountiful; and Teancum, by the orders of Moroni, caused that they should commence laboring in **digging a ditch round about** the land, or the city, Bountiful.

And he caused that they should build a **breastwork** of timbers upon the **inner bank** of the ditch; and they cast up dirt out of the **ditch** against the **breastwork** of timbers; and thus they did cause the Lamanites to labor until they had encircled the city of Bountiful round about with a strong **wall of timbers** and earth, to an exceeding height.

And he also placed armies on the south, in the borders of their possessions, and caused them to erect fortifications that they might **secure their** armies and their people **from** the hands of their **enemies**.

James Adair wrote *The History of the American Indians* in 1775. In this book, he also worked partly under the assumption that the Indians are descendants of the Jews. Based on the time it was written, Joseph Smith might easily have had access to a copy. In fact, it is difficult

to believe otherwise, considering the amazing parallels between certain parts of the *BM* and this book. B.H. Roberts was the first to suggest that Joseph Smith might have used this book in creating his ideas. On page 152 of *Studies of the Book of Mormon*, Roberts stated that the book was widely quoted in America. It is worth noting that Ethan Smith in *View of the Hebrews* relied partially on Adair's work, including referring to Adair's idea that the Indians came from the West, and were originally of the same color. Thus, if Joseph had read Ethan Smith's book, he certainly should have been aware of Adair's.

I think it is certain that Joseph Smith had read this book recently when he wrote *Alma*; in addition to describing basically the same structures, he uses several phrases (sometimes in different ways) from Adair's single paragraph in a few chapters of the *BM*.

I have done quite a bit of writing in my life, and I noticed that wording from things I have read sometimes finds its way into my style. While reading a book by P.G. Wodehouse, for example, I found British idioms being incorporated into letters that I wrote. Smith seemed to have a similar habit. As we can see here, Joseph Smith was probably reading Adair's book at the time he wrote *Alma* 48-53. He was not copying Adair word-for-word, although he did seem to use his ideas. On the other hand, he did pick up a few phrases that unmistakably link those chapters to a single paragraph in *The History of the American Indians*.

The most obvious similarity between the *BM* excerpts (2,3,4) and Adair's history (1) is that both are describing forts. More importantly, both are describing forts that were built by the ancestors of the American Indians. Even more amazing is the similarity in structure, and wording used to describe that structure. Joseph Smith describes "banks of earth"; Adair describes "great mounds of earth." Smith says they were "digging a ditch round about to enclose" the city, and that the Lamanites could not get in because of the "depth of the ditch"; Adair says "a deep ditch [e]nclosed the fortresses." Adair says they raised a "high breast-work"; Smith describes a "breastwork of timbers...to an exceeding height." Although there are some subtle differences between the two descriptions, they seem to be describing almost exactly the same structure. This means that Joseph Smith could easily have gotten his idea from this book that predated the *BM* by several decades.

In addition, there are unquestionable similarities in word use. The phrase "which had been dug" appears in both excerpts. In both, the exact same wording is used to describe the forts: "forts of security." Both use the word "earth" to refer to the dirt or clay. Both use the words "enclose," "stone," and "the ditch" (which is described as "deep" in both accounts). I am unsure of what Adair meant, but he said the forts were "overspread with trees," while Joseph describes a "wall of timbers," which may or may not be a parallel. Both works use the phrase "inner side/bank," referring to the mounds of earth. Both Adair and Smith used the phrase "secure their...from...enem[ies]"; in both cases it refers to protecting the civilization from the enemy (in one case *houses*, and in another *people*). The phrase "against an enemy," found in this paragraph, is used in a different way by Smith in *Alma* 48:14. Adair used the word "breast-work" twice, and Smith used this twice in *Alma* 48:4.ⁿ

For nearly every parallel, there must be hundreds of ways to express the ideas. "Forts of security," to choose one example, is not the only (or, I doubt, most common) way to describe a fortress. But, both selected this wording. Considering the fact that the origins of the two documents should have been totally separate, the similarities in word use seem amazing. As I pointed out earlier, Smith obviously did not copy word-for-word, but he could have lifted many ideas. In these few chapters, Smith used a vocabulary that was littered with words and phrases

ⁿ Smith used this only once more in the *BM*, but with a different meaning; see Mosiah 11:11

found in this one paragraph. It seems reasonable to assume that Smith had recently read this part of James Adair's book before writing Alma 48-53.

If Smith really were "inspired" to translate this part of the *BM*, it would be literally incredible that he used so many similar words and phrases as Adair. When taken with the fact that these similarities are found in a section describing the exact same ideas, it becomes difficult to believe there is not some connection. Some will consider the possibility that similar words were used to describe a similar phenomenon. But, this cannot explain expressions like "which had been dug," and "against an enemy." These two phrases showed up in unrelated contexts in each account, yet the wording remained identical. Unless Smith used Adair's work as source material for the *BM*, this seems a very unlikely coincidence.

Jerald and Sandra Tanner identified more word parallels between this book and the *BM*.^o On page 122 of *The History* is the phrase "for the space of three days and nights." In Alma 36:10, the words "for the space of three days and three nights" can be found. There is only one difference in these two phrases, and that is the word *three* which appears an extra time in the *BM*. On page 125, Adair uses the phrase "for the space of four moons." Joseph used this phrase in Omni 1:21 thus: "for the space of nine moons." Referring to months as "moons" sound like an Indian cliché, and Joseph only used it in Omni. It is not surprising to find it in an almost identical phrase in Adair's book.

Probably the most striking parallel given by the Tanners was the following:

On pages 178-179, we find this information:

"In the Tuccabatches... are two brazen tables, and five of copper. They esteem them so sacred as to keep them constantly in their holy of holies... *Old Bracket*, an Indian... gave the following description of them:... The shape of the two **brass plates**... [was] about a foot and a half in diameter.

"He said — he was told by his forefathers that those plates were given to them by the man **we call God**; that there had been many more of other shapes... and some **had writing upon them which were buried** with particular men; and that they had instructions given with them, viz. they must only be handled by particular people... He only remembered three more, which were buried with three of his family..." (SLC Messenger #84, italics and bold by the Tanners).

As the story from *Maccabees* showed, Joseph could have gotten the idea for the "plates of brass" being in the treasury from the KJV. This story could easily have given him the idea of digging up some plates with a sacred meaning. Also notice that the word "tables" was again used to describe these "brass plates." These further parallels strengthen the idea that Joseph used Adair's writings as a source for the *BM*.

Once again, remarkable likenesses have shown up in a book written prior to the *BM*. Not only could Joseph have used this book for ideas about the Lamanite/Nephite civilizations, it seems likely that many of the phrases he employed came from this work. Although there is no direct proof that Joseph used this book, its very existence undermines the originality of the *Book of Mormon*, and suggests that Joseph had the ability to invent (perhaps through plagiarism) much of its contents.

Lucy Mack Smith wrote a book about Joseph Smith and his family in which she largely supported her son's claims. However, she also gave evidence that Joseph understood Indian culture long before he wrote the *Book of Mormon*.

^o Tanner, *Salt Lake City Messenger*, #84

Furthermore, the angel told him, at the interview mentioned last, that the time had not yet come for the plates to be brought forth to the world; that he could not take them from the place wherein they were deposited until he had learned to keep the commandments of God—not only till he was willing, but able, to do it. The angel bade Joseph come to this place every year, at the same time of the year, and he would meet him there and give him further instruction. The ensuing evening, when the family were all together, Joseph made known to them all that he had communicated to his father in the field, and also of his finding the record, as well as what passed between him and the angel while he was at the place where the plates were deposited.

...

From this time forth, Joseph continued to receive instructions from the Lord, and we continued to get the children together every evening, for the purpose of listening while he gave us a relation of the same. I presume our family presented an aspect as singular as any that ever lived upon the face of the earth—all seated in a circle, father, mother, sons, and daughters, and giving the most profound attention to a boy, eighteen years of age, who had never read the Bible through in his life: he seemed much less inclined to the perusal of books than any of the rest of our children, but far more given to meditation and deep study.

...

We were now confirmed in the opinion that God was about to bring to light something upon which we could stay our minds, or that would give us a more perfect knowledge of the plan of salvation and the redemption of the human family. This caused us greatly to rejoice, the sweetest union of happiness pervaded our house, and tranquility reigned in our midst.

During our evening conversations, Joseph would occasionally give us some of the most amusing recitals that could be imagined. He Would [sic] describe the ancient inhabitants of this continent, their dress, mode of traveling, and the animals upon which they rode, their cities, their buildings, with every particular; their mode of warfare; and also their religious worship. This he would do with as much ease, seemingly, as if he had spent his whole life with them. (*Joseph Smith, The Prophet And His Progenitors For Many Generations*, Chapter 19, Lucy Mack Smith)

As is obvious from this quote from Joseph's mother, Joseph had a great knowledge of the American Indians before he ever translated the *Book of Mormon*. Certainly, it would have been possible for God to reveal these things to him. However, the fact remains: Joseph Smith had a great deal of knowledge about the Indians. It seems quite likely that part of this knowledge originated with books like Adair's and Ethan Smith's, which were published before Joseph ever translated the *BM*, and both of which postulated that the Indians were descendants of the Jews.

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^p 2 Nephi 5:26

^q see Tanner, *The Mormon Kingdom V. 1*, Chapter 13

^r Known as “Satisfaction Theory,” the idea of needing an infinite being to satisfy the penalty for sinning against an infinite God, was first detailed by Saint Anselm in the 12th century. Anselm held that an only an infinite being could accomplish the infinite atonement needed to redeem mankind (*Cur Deus Homo*). The idea was challenged with Calvinism and “Substitution theory,” and was still being debated in the 1800’s. The teaching never appeared in the *Bible*, but the *Book of Mormon* refers to it in 2 Nephi 9:7.

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^s *History of the Church*, Volume 5, xxxii

^t *Doctrine and Covenants* 132:51

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^u *Doctrine and Covenants* 132:20

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^v see *Book of Mormon*, 1830 printing

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^w Jeff Lindsay, http://www.jefflindsay.com/LDSFAQ/FQ_BMProblems.shtml

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^x Cowan, *Mormon Claims Answered*, Ch. 4

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^y Larson, *Ensign*, September 1976, 77-82

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^z Malin L. Jacobs & Stanley D. Barker, *"Furious Wind" and Jaredite Barges*.

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8) Did Lucy Mack Smith (or her husband) contribute to the *Book of Mormon*?

The following dream, according to Joseph Smith's mother, was received by his father in 1811. The reader should compare with Lehi's vision/dream from 1 Nephi 8. Although this does not prove Joseph Smith copied his father's dream, it is interesting that his mother claimed he had such an experience years before Joseph Smith even claimed to hear of the "gold plates" or the *Book of Mormon*.

From this forward my husband seemed more confirmed than ever in the opinion that there was no order or class of religionists that knew any more concerning the kingdom of God, than those of the world, or such as made no profession of religion whatever.

In 1811, we moved from Royalton, Vermont, to the town of Lebanon, New Hampshire. Soon after arriving here, my husband received another very singular vision, which I will relate:

"I thought," said he, "I was traveling in an open, desolate field, which appeared to be very barren. As I was thus traveling, the thought suddenly came into my mind that I had better stop and reflect upon what I was doing, before I went any further. So I asked myself, 'What motive can I have in traveling here, and what place can this be?' My guide, who was by my side, as before, said, 'This is the desolate world; but travel on.' The road was so broad and barren that I wondered why I should travel in it; for, said I to myself, 'Broad is the road, and wide is the gate that leads to death, and many there be that walk therein; but narrow is the way, and straight is the gate that leads to everlasting' life, and few there be that go in thereat.'

Traveling a short distance farther, I came to a narrow path. This path I entered, and, when I had traveled a little way in it, I beheld a beautiful stream of water, which ran from the east to the west. Of this stream I could see neither the source nor yet the termination; but as far as my eyes could extend I could see a rope running along the bank of it, about as high as a man could reach, and beyond me was a low, but very pleasant valley, in which stood a tree such as I had never seen before. It was exceedingly handsome, insomuch that I looked upon it with wonder and admiration. Its beautiful branches spread themselves somewhat like an umbrella, and it bore a kind of fruit, in shape much like a chestnut bur, and as white as snow, or, if possible whiter. I gazed upon the same with considerable interest, and as I was doing so the burs or shells commenced opening and shedding their particles, or the fruit which they contained, which was of dazzling whiteness. I drew near and began to eat of it, and I found it delicious beyond description. As I was eating, I said in my heart, 'I can not eat this alone, I must bring my wife and children, that they may partake with me.' Accordingly, I went and brought my family, which consisted of a wife and seven children, and we all commenced eating, and praising God for this blessing. We were exceedingly happy, insomuch that our joy could not easily be expressed.

While thus engaged, I beheld a spacious building standing opposite the valley which we were in, and it appeared to reach to the very heavens. It was full of doors and windows, and they were filled with people, who were very finely dressed. When these people observed us in the low valley, under the tree, they pointed the finger of scorn at us, and treated us with all manner of disrespect and contempt. But their contumely we utterly disregarded.

I presently turned to my guide, and inquired of him the meaning of the fruit that was so delicious. He told me it was the pure love of God, shed abroad in the hearts of all those who love him, and keep his commandments. He then commanded me to go and bring the rest of my children. I told him that we were all there. 'No,' he replied, 'look yonder, you have two more, and you must bring them also.' Upon raising my eyes, I saw two small children, standing some distance off. I immediately went to them, and brought them to the tree; upon which they commenced eating with the rest, and we all rejoiced together. The more we ate, the more we

seemed to desire, until we even got down upon our knees, and scooped it up, eating it by double handfuls.

After feasting in this manner a short time, I asked my guide what was the meaning of the spacious building which I saw. He replied, 'It is Babylon, it is Babylon, and it must fall. The people in the doors and windows are the inhabitants thereof, who scorn and despise the Saints of God because of their humility.'

I soon awoke, clapping my hands together for joy."
(*Biographical Sketches of Joseph Smith the prophet*, Lucy Mack Smith)

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^{cc} The word *chiasmus* comes from the Greek letter *chi* that resembles our modern *X*. The *X* is used because reversals in word order allow an *X* to be drawn by connecting the similar words or thoughts.

^{dd} This can be found on his web page, at <http://jefflindsay.com/BMEvidences.shtml>

^{ee} The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints (not “Latter-day,” also known as Strangites), *Chiasmus: Recent Discoveries*, see <http://www.strangite.org/Chiasmus.htm>

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^{gg} *History of the Church*, Volume 1, 50

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^{hh} *Doctrine and Covenants*, 10:7

ⁱⁱ Tanner, *Changing World of Mormonism*, 103

^{jj} Tanner, *Changing World*, 106-107

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^{kk} Letter from Cowdery to David Whitmer, Dated July 28, 1847

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^{ll} Whitmer, *An Address to All Believers in Christ*, 8

^{mm} *History of the Church*, Volume 3, 307

ⁿⁿ Letter quoted in *Senate Document 189*, February 15, 1841, pp.6-9 as cited in *Changing World*, 98



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^{oo} Joseph Smith, *History of the Church*, Volume 1, 20
^{pp} *Doctrine and Covenants*, Section 3

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⁹⁹ Words of Mormon 1:6

^{rr} 1 Nephi 9:4

^{ss} 1 Nephi 6:1

^{tt} 1 Nephi 9:2

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^{uu} 1 Nephi 19:2

^{vv} 1 Nephi 6:3

^{ww} 1 Nephi 19:6

^{xx} 1 Nephi 9:2, 2 Nephi 4:14, 2 Nephi 5:33, Jacob 1:2-3

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Conclusions on the *Book of Mormon*

As I stated earlier, I have limited myself only a few of the problems with the *Book of Mormon*. I do not have the ability or the time to research the archaeology, linguistics, or genetics, although I believe all of these speak out against the *BM*. Apologists will always assert that lack of evidence is not evidence. The biggest problem with the *BM* in these areas is exactly that: lack of evidence. However, it is always possible that someone will find all of the plants and animals, the huge civilizations, and records of a people spoken of in the *BM*. Therefore, I do not see the point in stating things like, “no evidence has been found of...” Mormons will simply assert that the possibility still exists.

On the other hand, I think the evidences I have shown here are a strong case against the *BM* as an ancient text. Besides showing where Joseph Smith may have gotten many of his ideas, I think it is obvious that he reused several phrases from books that might easily have been his “inspiration.” Changes to the *Book of Mormon* and historical inconsistencies strengthen the argument against its ancient origin. I do not believe that Joseph Smith ever had the power to translate any ancient record. The *Book of Abraham* and its failure to live up to the original documents shows that Joseph was capable of fooling people into believing in his “translations.”

I also think it undeniably important that the *BM* refutes much of the Mormon doctrines. The D&C seems to be something of an “addendum” to the *BM*, explaining doctrines that Joseph thought of later, or wanted to change. As I mentioned, the *BM* has changed significantly since Joseph Smith first wrote it. It was full of poor grammar, misspellings (many of which remain), and doctrinal problems. Even the close to 4000 changes since its release have not fixed or covered up all of the flaws in the book.

Although the book contains some Christian teachings, it is not groundbreaking in theological ideas. Additionally, much of the book details wars and history, which to me seem more like Joseph’s attempt to support the hypotheses of people who believed the Indians were descendants of the Jews. The amount of doctrinal material in the book is not extensive—most of it occurs in the “small plates” section, and a good portion of that is simply texts copied from Isaiah. The *Book of Mormon* could be described as a compilation of unimpressive sermons intermingled with extensive wars. Could it be an ancient text? I find this idea impossible to believe. It truly seems to originate with the times of Joseph Smith.

If I were asked to propose a method by which Smith wrote the book, I would only be guessing. But, I think it could have been something like the following. In 1823 (or earlier), Joseph Smith read *View of the Hebrews* (or some similar book). He was convinced that the Indians were descendants of the Jews. He continued to study books like *A History of the American Indians* up to, and after the time he started the *BM*. He also studied the *Bible* and attended the sermons of various preachers during that time. Having been involved with “seer stones” long before the time he received the “Urim and Thummin,” he applied similar methods to the translation of an ancient text. He claimed to have found an ancient record, but let no one view it that knew anything about ancient writings. Possibly, he created some false plates and makes several figures on them, as if they were an ancient text. Because it was difficult to make the engravings, he “sealed” 2/3 of the book, so that witnesses would not see that he did not finish the project. Using the “seer stone” that he used to search for buried treasure as a teenager, he pretended to translate the *BM*. Because he often hid behind a curtain, he might have had books such as the *Bible* or *View of the Hebrews* in hand while dictating. With all of the

sources that I mentioned combined, and probably others, Joseph would only need an extensive imagination to fill in the details.

B.H. Roberts (one who understood the Prophet's life better than most) stated:

In light of this evidence, there can be no doubt as to the possession of a vividly strong, creative imagination by Joseph Smith, the Prophet, an imagination, it could with reason be urged, which, given the suggestions that are to be found in the "common knowledge" of accepted American antiquities of the times, supplemented by such a work as Ethan Smith's *View of the Hebrews*, would make it possible for him to create a book such as the Book of Mormon is.

I have not let Roberts make my argument for me, but I agree with his conclusions. Joseph Smith could have created the *Book of Mormon* without "inspiration." The contradictions, plagiarism, and unoriginal ideas all point to the fact that Joseph did not translate an ancient text, but used his resources to fool people into believing he did. As I have shown, the so-called witnesses are not particularly convincing. The only real evidence we have is the book itself, which appears to be at least partially derived from pre-19th century works, and other books available during the time of Joseph Smith. In light of the things that I have mentioned here, I cannot accept that the *Book of Mormon* is the translation of an ancient record.

Conclusion

The arguments made in this paper are only a few of those that could be made against Mormonism. One friend asked me why I even bothered writing this paper. He did not think the LDS Church was worthy of such attention. In many ways, he was right.

Church leaders have said that people “can leave the Church, but they can’t leave it alone.”^a I suspect this is not true of many who simply stop practicing Mormonism. It probably is true of people like me who were once firm believers. People like me, who have long considered the Church infallible, feel horrible when they find out it is not. I spent two years of my life teaching people about the wonderful gospel of Jesus Christ, only to find that the Church I belonged to had much of its origins in the occult. In light of this, *of course* it is difficult to “leave the Church alone.” I have been disillusioned, and in the process have come to feel betrayed by those I trusted.

Implied in the statement quoted above is the idea that the Church must be true, or else it would not have so many critics. This is the worst kind of logic; by this standard, anything with many enemies (especially former members) must be correct. The KKK, the Nazis, and other horrible groups surely have their enemies. Catholics who leave to join a Protestant organization often criticize their former belief system and church. Former Jehovah’s Witnesses and Christian Scientists who break out of their churches have become the biggest enemies, and a thorn in the side of the leaders. In fact, any time someone seriously changes their beliefs, there is the possibility of being critical of those who continue to hold them.

Does the fact that someone becomes a serious enemy of an organization after leaving it prove something about that organization? It proves only that in some way it has engendered anger or resentment in the ex-member. In some cases, these feelings might be unwarranted or unreasonable. But, does this somehow prove that God leads the organization? Are all enemies of the Church inspired by Satan? Or, do those who attack the Church’s enemies (apologists) somehow prove that the enemies are, in fact, right? I doubt that either conclusion is warranted.

In spite of this fact, I hope never to become an “enemy” of the Church. I have explained why I do not believe in its teachings. I think they are false, and are based on false statements that continue to this day. However, the Church is not all bad, and many people benefit from certain teachings. These writings are more of a way of justifying to others and myself the decision I made. Certainly, I did not take this step lightly. My decision to leave the Church was the most difficult decision I ever made, but I consider it the right one. If I spent the rest of my life attacking the Church, it would be a waste of time, and the Church would ruin my life much more than if I had remained a member.

On the other hand, I believe that my decision was warranted by the facts. Any person who might benefit from these things, if they choose to hear them, will receive my help and support. I do not plan to actively oppose the Church, or attempt even once to forcibly change someone’s mind. But, I am perfectly willing to argue my case with anyone who wants to disagree with me.

I sincerely believe that it is easier to love others and respect them now that I am not a Mormon. I believe I can be just as good of a person without the Church, and I will try to do so. Already, I have realized how much my dogmatic attitude made me lose respect for those who did not agree with me. I am slowly overcoming this tendency to look down on people of differing opinions and beliefs. Hopefully, what I have written here does not make Mormons

^a Neal A. Maxwell, “The Net Gathers of Every Kind,” *Ensign*, Nov. 1980, 14;
Neal A. Maxwell, “Becometh As a Child,” *Ensign*, May 1996, 68

feel that I look down on them. I feel sorry for them, because I think they are deceived by their own minds and the Church (not always, but sometimes, intentionally). I continue to respect them, because I doubt that most have enough information to realize the problems with their religion. It would be wrong, however, to say that I respect their beliefs. I do, in spite of this, respect their *right* to believe.

I am sure what I have written will be offensive in some way to most Mormons. This was not my intent. The criticisms against the Church cannot help but offend, especially if they are true. It is hard to hear anything bad about someone, or something one loves. Regardless of the pain this may cause for others, I feel that it is not necessary to apologize for writing what I feel is the truth.

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