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Apostasy in Sweden!

Their 15 Unanswered Questions

“Some Mormons Search the Web and Find Doubt” declared the front page story in the *New York Times* on July 21, 2013. Laurie Goodstein reported that Hans Mattsson, LDS European Area Authority Seventy from 2000–2005, and approximately 600 LDS members, mainly in Sweden, were sharing their doubts through contact on the Internet. When members came to Mr. Mattsson with their questions he found himself ill-prepared to answer them and approached his superiors for answers. The article states:

When fellow believers in Sweden first began coming to him [Mattsson] with information from the Internet that contradicted the church’s history and teachings, he dismissed it as “anti-Mormon propaganda,” the whisperings of Lucifer. He asked his superiors for help in responding to the members’ doubts, and when they seemed to only sidestep the questions, Mr. Mattsson began his own investigation.¹

One of the catalysts for some members in Sweden to start investigating LDS claims derived from news stories in 2005 relating to the 200th anniversary of Joseph Smith’s birth in 1805, where historical issues unfamiliar to the Swedes were discussed. A local stake president

(administrative overseer of several congregations) even approached Hans Mattsson for answers.² This was the first time Mattsson had heard of Joseph Smith translating the Book of Mormon by staring at a stone in his hat, DNA issues, differing accounts of Smith’s first vision, Smith’s polyandry, problems with the Book of Abraham, etc. Hans promised to look into the matter.

Finally a meeting was set up in 2005 for the stake president, Hans Mattsson and a few other Mormons to meet with Mattsson’s superior, and L. Tom Perry, a senior apostle from the LDS Church.³ The Stake President arrived with a stack of photocopies documenting the various problem areas of Mormon history, which was soon appropriated by the top leaders with a promise that they would get back to him on that. The apostle announced that he “had a manuscript in his briefcase that, once

it was published, would prove all the doubters wrong. But Mr. Mattsson said the promised text never appeared, and when he asked the apostle about it, he was told it was impertinent to ask.”⁴

**Hans Mattsson**

1 Laurie Goodstein, “Some Mormons Search the Web and Find Doubt,” *New York Times* (July 21, 2013); <http://tinyurl.com/mytkwua>

2 *Mormon Stories*, podcast interviews with Hans Mattsson, #430-434, <http://mormonstories.org/hans-mattsson/>

3 LDS Apostle L. Tom Perry was in charge of church affairs in Europe at the time; *New York Times*, (July 21, 2013); *Mormon Stories*, audio interview with Hans Mattsson, #433, part 4, <http://mormonstories.org/hans-mattsson/>

4 *New York Times* (July 21, 2013); *Mormon Stories* #430-434.

Was the purported manuscript just a delaying tactic or did the apostle realize the answers in his briefcase were not sufficient for the questions? To date, no such book has been printed by the LDS Church.

The *Times* article continues: “That encounter is what really set off Mr. Mattsson’s doubts. He began reading everything he could. He listened to the “Mormon Stories” podcasts. And he read *Joseph Smith: Rough Stone Rolling*, a biography by Richard Lyman Bushman, a historian at Columbia University and a prominent Mormon.” After being released from his position as a Seventy and while recovering from heart surgery, Mattsson continued researching on the Internet but often found himself struggling to understand some of the discussions due to the language barrier and issues he had never considered. He also read Fawn M. Brodie’s biography of *No Man Knows My History: The Life of Joseph Smith* plus many other books.

Through his numerous contacts with other questioning members, Mattsson gathered together an Internet study group of about 600 Mormons. When news of this group surfaced the church was worried that they were starting a new church, but it was simply a matter of like-minded people searching for answers.

During this time Mattsson led a faithful LDS lifestyle, thus hoping to be open to the guidance of the Holy Spirit. The *Times* reported, “But when he discovered credible evidence that the church’s founder, Joseph Smith, was a polygamist and that the Book of Mormon and other scriptures were rife with historical anomalies, Mr. Mattsson said he felt that the foundation on which he had built his life began to crumble.”⁵ He is further quoted as saying, “I felt like I had an earthquake under my feet . . . Everything I’d been taught, everything I’d been proud to preach about and witness about just crumbled under my feet. It was such a terrible psychological and nearly physical disturbance.”

Mattsson said that “when he started sharing what he had learned with other Mormons in Sweden, the stake president (who oversees a cluster of congregations) told him not to talk about it to any members, even his wife and children. He did not obey: ‘I said to them, why are you afraid for the truth?’”⁶

The LDS Church’s response to the Swedish members’ questions is without precedence, covering seven years (2005–2012), two apostles’ visits, a meeting with a member of the First Quorum of the Seventy and two official church historians. During the summer of 2010 LDS Apostle Russell M. Nelson and Ronald A. Rasband

of the Seventy visited Sweden and met with some of the members, but provided few satisfactory answers. They then promised to send the church historians.

Thus on Sunday evening, November 28, 2010, Marlin Jensen (then a member of the First Quorum of the Seventy and official LDS Church Historian), assistant church historian Richard Turley, Erich W. Kopschke of the First Quorum of the Seventy, R. Ingvar Olsson of the Area Seventy, and approximately 25 members met privately at a church building in Stockholm, Sweden. Most of them were aware of the various historical issues, although a few bishops and stake presidents were not.

While the opening and closing remarks were in Swedish, the major part of the meeting was in English, which was unofficially recorded by one of the attendees. The following quotes are taken from the transcript of the 2010 meeting⁷

First the Swedish leader made comments relating to seeking truth over error and relying on the Holy Spirit for answers. Then Marlin Jensen spoke of the combination of feeling and intellect in seeking answers, implying that information outside of official church channels was unreliable. He then reassured the members “that everything the church has in the way of historical information will one day become available to the whole world. . . . And one of the ways we’ll do that is by putting on the Internet our church history catalogue that lists everything that we have. And then over time, we’ll make digital copies of all of our documents and make those available to people across the world.”

Unfortunately, it appears that this project will extend years into the future. And even posting the various photos of Smith’s letters and church documents fails to help the average person find resolution for troubling historical issues. While many welcome the plan to make digital images of the early LDS documents, this still is not addressing the need for official LDS Church answers.

Jensen continued that “there will always be two forces working on us: the light of Spirit of Christ and the spirit of the devil.” Later he commented, “But while that’s going on, we still have these two powers to deal with, and every day as we’re in the midst of this, brothers and sisters, we have to make a decision, and the central decision we have to make is whether we’re going to believe or whether we’re going to doubt.”

He concluded, “most of us who have decided to believe **are as aware of the questions that you have as you are and maybe even a lot more questions that**

5 *New York Times*, July 21, 2013.

6 *New York Times*, July 21, 2013.

7 Transcript of November 2010 meeting in Sweden, online at: <http://www.roadkilldelight.com/NOM/SFMJRT.pdf>

you haven't thought about yet." Jensen went on to observe, "There's nothing that I know about Mormonism that bothers me. Are there contradictions, are there inconsistencies, are there paradoxes? Yes." One member called out, "And you're aware of a lot more things that we might not be aware of yet? But still you stand and you think, 'I can—I can stand for this'?" To which Jensen replied, "Right. . . . So I'm just saying they're very good questions, they're questions that are being asked by others, and there are a lot more questions that could be asked." The member responded, "Will you have very good answers?" Jensen then commented, "You'll see in a moment. We'll have what answers we have." He then entered into a discussion of how things are "spiritually discerned" and each one must "make your own decisions." The leaders then took questions from the audience.

15 Questions

While the questions and discussion could have been broken up into many parts, those at the meeting seemed to agree that there were 15 basic questions:⁸

1. Book of Mormon Translation. The first question related to the translation process used in producing the Book of Mormon. Why would God and the Nephites go to such efforts to preserve the ancient plates when they didn't seem to be used by Smith to translate the book? Those who witnessed the process described Smith placing his face in his hat and staring at a seer stone, utilizing some sort of visionary process while the plates were either covered and off to the side or not in the room. David Whitmer, one of the three witnesses of the Book of Mormon, described the process as follows:

I will now give you a description of the manner in which the Book of Mormon was translated. Joseph Smith would put the seer stone into a hat, and put his face in the hat, drawing it closely around his face to exclude the light; and in the darkness the spiritual light would shine. A piece of something resembling parchment would appear, and on that appeared the writing. One character at a time would appear, and under it was the interpretation in English. Brother Joseph would read off the English to Oliver Cowdery, who was his principal scribe, and when it was written down and repeated to Brother Joseph to see if it was correct, then it would disappear, and another character with the interpretation would appear. Thus the Book of Mormon was translated by the gift and power of God, and not by any power of man.⁹

⁸ See list at MormonThink.com, online at <http://www.mormonthink.com/glossary/swedish-rescue2.htm>

⁹ David Whitmer, *An Address to All Believers in Christ*, (Richmond, Missouri, 1887), p. 12.

In 1888 Emma Smith, Joseph's wife and scribe, described the dictation process to her son:

In writing for your father I frequently wrote day after day, often sitting by the table close by him, he sitting with **his face buried in his hat, with the stone in it**, and dictating hour after hour with nothing between us.¹⁰

When asked why Smith used a hat, Turley responded: "The hat was apparently to block light out so that Joseph . . . could see what he was doing with the record. Sometimes the light, you know, affects your spirit. We don't know exactly how it works, but he did say this: in the early days of his **translation**, he was relying on **revelatory tools** of some sort or another—Urim and Thummim, seer stones, whatever the case may be." How was this a "translation" when Smith wasn't even looking at the metal record?

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Drawing of Joseph Smith dictating Book of Mormon

Also related to that was a question about misleading church artwork. Joseph Smith is always depicted sitting at a desk, staring at the plates and running his finger over the characters while dictating to his scribe. However, those who witnessed the process (Martin Harris, David Whitmer, Emma Smith, Emma's father Isaac Hale, Smith's brother William) described him looking at his seer stone in the hat instead of looking at the plates.¹¹ Isn't the church being deceptive when they print pictures that do not show the actual process?

Turley responded by pointing out that old Christian art wrongly depicts people in the Holy Land as dressed in European garb. It is the artist's choice. But he side-stepped the issue of official LDS art work always depicting Joseph sitting at a table looking at the plates,

¹⁰ *The Saints' Herald*, (May 19, 1888), p. 310; Jerald and Sandra Tanner, *Changing World of Mormonism* (Moody Press, 1981), p. 81; Dan Vogel, *Early Mormon Documents*, vol. 1, p. 541.

¹¹ "Translation or Divination," Institute For Religious Research; online at <http://mit.irr.org/translation-or-divination>

as though he was doing a regular translation. When challenged that he hadn't answered the basic problem Turley responded, "Often the way stories have been told over time don't conform with the history. And so our goal is to try to make them conform more closely." Again, this does not answer the question of why the translation process is always depicted incorrectly when the historians have always known what the process was. Someone spoke up, "Can you see that we've feel deceived? When you say translated, you had the record and you translated. . . . But he wasn't. It would be much better if you said he was sitting and praying and got the revelation. But it's kind of deceiving to say it that way [that it was a translation]." To which Turley responded, "I think that's a difference in perception rather than in reality. When Joseph used the term 'translate,' he meant revelation. OK?"

Jensen then pointed out that he had spiritual confirmation that the Book of Mormon was true. Turley added that the speed of dictating the manuscript also pointed to revelation. Then a member observed, "That is amazing. But those are not the questions we want [answered]." The member pressed again about the misleading art work. Turley admonished they should not blame the prophet, it was done by "ordinary people like me who do the best we know how" and then "new discoveries, new documents" are found and things are rewritten.

The problem with this statement is that they have always known that the witnesses said Smith used a stone in his hat. They just covered it up.

2. Polygamy and polyandry. Turley explained, "Did Joseph Smith practice plural marriage? Yes. Many church members don't know it but the answer is yes. Did Joseph Smith practice polyandry [marrying women who already had living husbands]? The answer is yes. Joseph Smith did practice polyandry. How many wives did Joseph Smith have? We're in the process, as you know, of preparing the papers of Joseph Smith for publication. We hope to include in the papers of Joseph Smith a list of Joseph Smith's wives based on the best available evidence."

Here again Turley is avoiding the issue. Yes, it would be nice to have an official list of Smith's wives but why not refer them to current research on the subject? He could have referred them to LDS scholar Todd Compton's book, *In Sacred Loneliness*,¹² where he gives biographical

sketches of thirty-three of Smith's plural wives. Even the LDS FamilySearch program shows twenty-four wives for Smith.¹³

Turley continued, "So we'll answer that question in the future. . . . why did he marry the wives of people [who] were already married? That actually boils down to a marriage by marriage statement. And it's fairly complex but it's an excellent question."

One of the problems of polyandry is that it is not covered in Smith's polygamy revelation. The *Doctrine and Covenants*, section 132:61-62, allows for plural marriage with virgins, not women with living husbands.

The discussion then turned to the current LDS Church beliefs regarding polygamy. Were Smith's marriages simply spiritual or were they conjugal relationships? One member brought up the question of Smith having children with his plural wives. "One woman said the child that she bore she didn't know if it was the child of Joseph or the child of, in this case, Orson Hyde, I think, an apostle. So that indicates that it was definitely not a spiritual marriage, it was all the way marriage. So, I have a question, what do you feel about that?"

Turley's response was, "It's true that Joseph Smith [practiced] plural marriage in that he had wives who were not married to anybody else, it's true that he practiced polyandry and he did have wives who were married to somebody else."

When pressed about whether polygamy was a current doctrine he replied: "We do believe in polygamy; we don't practice polygamy. That's what I'm trying to say." When pressed about whether or not the church officially endorses Smith's polyandry, Turley stated, "I've never seen a formal statement about that." He continued, "either Joseph was a prophet of God or he wasn't. Correct?"

3. Was it right and Christ-like to force women into polygamous marriages? A member asked if it was right "to take the wives or have sex with wives that are already married to other men? To take other women in a secret way, force them into some kind of marriage, I would like to call it mistresses, or forcing 14-year-old girls to marry him against her obvious will, I just don't understand. Behind his own wife, . . . The deeper you go on this the worse it becomes."

On the issue of Smith marrying 14 and 16-year-old girls, Turley tried to dismiss this on the grounds that girls married younger on the frontier. However, Nauvoo, Illinois, in the 1840's was not exactly the

12 Todd Compton, *In Sacred Loneliness: The Plural Wives of Joseph Smith*, (Signature Books, 1997). A longer list is included in George D. Smith's book, *Nauvoo Polygamy*. See also *Salt Lake City Messenger* (May 2009), no. 112, chart, online at: <http://www.utlm.org/newsletters/no112.htm#Chart>

13 "Ancestral File", database, FamilySearch, online at: <http://familysearch.org/pal:/MM9.2.1/995N-B25> (accessed 2013-09-07), entry for Joseph Smith Jr.-Prophet.

frontier. It had 12,000 inhabitants, similar to Chicago, and a local militia of 2,500 men. Also, these were not legal marriages, which would have given the teenager the right of financial support from her husband, standing in the community and rights of inheritance. These were illegal, clandestine unions done in the strictest secrecy, especially kept from Smith's wife Emma.

Just a few weeks before Smith's death he preached, "What a thing it is for a man to be accused of committing adultery, and having seven wives, when I can only find one."¹⁴ He had at least thirty-four wives at the time of this sermon and most of them were probably sitting in the audience. Smith had also convinced many of his top leaders to secretly take additional wives. Thus the circle of deception continued to enlarge.

According to George D. Smith, by the end of 1843 there were a total of twenty-five Mormon men and seventy-two women secretly living polygamy in Nauvoo.¹⁵ By the time the Mormons fled Nauvoo in 1846 there were 196 male polygamists with 717 wives.¹⁶ All of this while church leaders continued to insist there was no truth to the reports of plural marriage. The LDS leaders did not publically announce the doctrine of plural marriage until 1852, five years after they had migrated to Utah. Also, Smith's revelation on plural marriage, section 132 of the *Doctrine and Covenants*, was not part of their scriptures until 1876.

The Swedish member was not to be put off. "But why does my spirit talks to me and screams wrong, wrong, wrong, even if it's a prophet of God? Do I have the devil in me who's talking to me and says I should understand this 14 and 16-year-old girls marrying? . . . So he did that right, it was God told him to do that? Go behind Emma and take these wives?"

At this point one of the Swedish leaders stepped in, explaining that there are many things in the Old Testament that we don't understand. "So, I don't know why Joseph did what Joseph did. . . . One thing that I know is Moses was a prophet. I know. I know that Jesus is the son of God. And I know that Joseph Smith was a prophet of God. I know that." And that was the end of the discussion on plural marriage.

4. Book of Abraham. What about the problems with the Book of Abraham and its supposed translation from the Egyptian papyri Smith purchased in 1835 in Kirtland, Ohio? Egyptologists have now translated the papyri

and found that they have nothing to do with Abraham.¹⁷ Turley responded: "Book of Abraham. Very quickly, let me just say a few things about it very simply. Number 1, again, it was received by revelation. Number 2, we don't have all the papyrus. . . . Number 3, . . . we've seen a lot of studies on the so-called alphabet and grammar book. There's some excellent research coming out of BYU in the next year that you need to read. That's all I have time to say about that."

Numbers 1 and 2 seem to contradict each other. If the Book of Abraham was a revelation then why bring up missing pieces of papyri? Even if one were to concede (which critics do not) that the text for the Book of Abraham was actually contained on one of the few missing pieces of papyri, it is clear from the extant papyri that Smith was indeed using them for his supposed "translation." He believed that the three illustrations taken from the papyri (which were copied and printed with the Book of Abraham) conveyed the same story of Abraham that he was supposedly "translating" from the text, whether that text is on the extant papyri or on the lost pieces. For Turley to simply say that "we don't have all the papyrus" does not dismiss the fact that the parts that *we do have* were clearly used by Smith in creating the Book of Abraham, to one extent or another, and their contents clearly depict not a story of Abraham but rather a common Egyptian funerary scene, as has been concluded by Egyptologists for decades.¹⁸

The person then brought up the counterfeit Kinderhook Plates and Joseph Smith's comments that would indicate they were authentic.¹⁹ These six small brass plates, with strange characters etched on them, were supposedly dug from an Indian mound near Kinderhook, Illinois, in 1843. The non-Mormons brought the plates to Smith to see what he would say about them. On May 1, 1843, William Clayton, Joseph Smith's private secretary, wrote in his journal:

I have seen 6 brass plates covered with ancient characters of language containing from 30 to 40 on each side of the plates. Prest J. [Joseph Smith] has translated a portion and says **they contain the history of the person with whom they were found and he was a descendant of Ham through the loins of Pharaoh king of Egypt,**

¹⁷ Charles Larson, *By His Own Hand Upon Papyrus*, (Institute for Religious Research, 1992); Robert K. Ritner, *The Joseph Smith Egyptian Papyri: A Complete Edition*, (Smith-Pettit Foundation, 2012).

¹⁸ *Salt Lake City Messenger*, "The Oldest Biblical Text? Joseph Smith's Book of Abraham Examined," (November 2009), no. 113, online at utlm.org; Larson, *By His Own Hand Upon Papyrus*; Ritner, *The Joseph Smith Egyptian Papyri*.

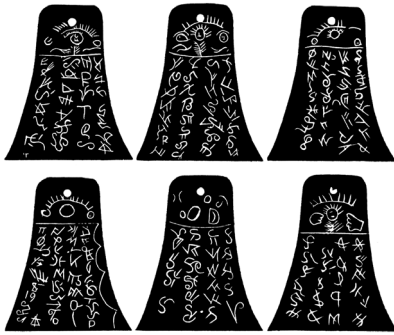
¹⁹ "Fooling the Prophet with the Kinderhook Plates," online at: www.mrm.org/kinderhook-plates; "The Kinderhook Plates," online at: www.utlm.org/onlineresources/kinderhookplates.htm

¹⁴ Joseph Smith, *History of the Church*, (Sunday, May 26, 1844), vol. 6, p. 411.

¹⁵ *Nauvoo Polygamy*, p. 323.

¹⁶ *Nauvoo Polygamy*, p. 573.

and that he received his kingdom from the ruler of heaven and earth.²⁰



Kinderhook Plates

Clayton's diary account then became the basis for the entry about the plates in the official *History of the Church*, vol. 5, page 372.

On May 7, 1843, Apostle Parley P. Pratt wrote a letter that included:

Six plates having the appearance of Brass have lately been dug out of the mound by a gentleman in Pike Co. Illinois. They are small and filled with engravings in Egyptian language and **contain the genealogy of one of the ancient Jaredites back to Ham the son of Noah.**²¹

Turley dismissed the statements about them as secondary and of no value. However, William Clayton and Parley P. Pratt were faithful, believing leaders in Mormonism. They made their comments because of what Joseph Smith had related to them, and they believed him to be right.²² The Mormons now concede that the plates were forgeries made to deceive Smith, thus necessitating some sort of dismissal of these statements. Since these plates were frauds there would have been no way for Smith to deduce that they "contain the genealogy" of one of the ancient Jaredites. Turley's response was "there's no official Church thing on that."

5. Lying for the Lord. "I have a question that's really related to polygamy. When I was on my mission in London in the seventies, we were taught a very important principle called *lying for the Lord*. I mean, we were taught that. And it's supposed to have been coined, this phrase, by I think John Taylor, and I wonder do you think

that there are circumstances where it's OK to withhold or manipulate truths just to defend or uphold the reputation of the Church? Is *lying for the Lord* still alive? That's my question."

It is interesting that the person mentioned Apostle John Taylor. In 1850 he was in Europe on a church mission and debated a minister in France. The minister charged that the Mormons were secretly practicing plural marriage in America. Taylor denied the charge and quoted the then-current *Doctrine and Covenants* which contained a section that specifically denied the practice of polygamy:

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.²³

However, John Taylor failed to mention that he had married at least twelve wives by that point.²⁴

Turley responded, "There are these clashes where sometimes one moral imperative or ethical imperative becomes superior to another. . . . When people bring up this topic, what they're usually talking about is during plural marriage time periods when people were asked about plural marriage and, again, it's a complicated subject but basically, people were trying to decide, do I say something, or do I not? Do I tell the truth or do I not? Do we teach as a church that you should lie? No, we don't."

Again Turley sidesteps the basic issue of the ethics of Joseph Smith and all of the LDS Church leadership lying about their illegal, secret plural marriages prior to 1852.²⁵

6. Mark Hofmann Forgeries. The next question related to the church purchasing documents from fellow Mormon Mark Hofmann in the 1980's despite the fact that they were actually forgeries. Hofmann met on numerous occasions with the President of the LDS Church and various apostles, showing them his documents. Why didn't the prophet realize the papers were fakes? Turley quickly dismissed this problem by simply referring people to his book, *Victims: The LDS Church and the Mark Hofmann Case*. However, his book does not provide an answer to the question of how a prophet can be thus deceived.²⁶

²⁰ William Clayton's *Journal* (May 1, 1843), as cited by James B. Allen, *Trials of Discipleship — The Story of William Clayton, a Mormon*, (University of Illinois Press, 1987), p. 117. Also George D. Smith, *An Intimate Chronicle: The Journals of William Clayton*, (Signature Books, 1995), p. 100.

²¹ *Ensign*, (August 1981), p. 73.

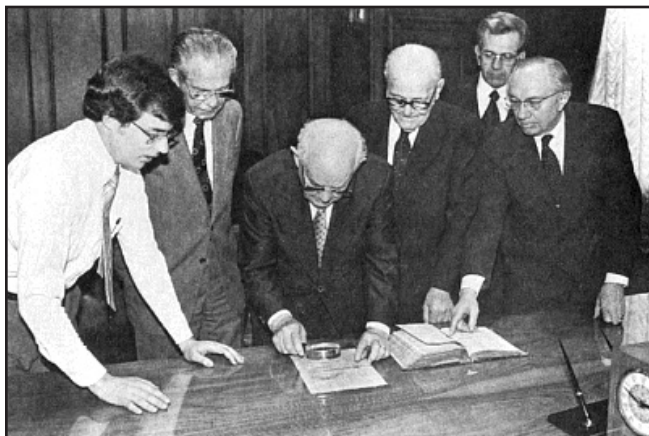
²² *Salt Lake City Messenger*, "Kinderhook Plates," (October 1981), no. 46; online at www.utlm.org/newsletters/no46.htm

²³ *Doctrine and Covenants*, 1835, sec. 101, p. 251.

²⁴ *Nauvoo Polygamy*, pp. 627-628.

²⁵ *Salt Lake City Messenger* (May 2009), no. 112; www.utlm.org/newsletters/no112.htm

²⁶ *Salt Lake City Messenger* (October 2010), no. 115; www.utlm.org/newsletters/no115.htm



Left to right: Mark Hofmann, 1st Counselor N. Eldon Tanner, LDS President Spencer W. Kimball, 2nd Counselor Marion G. Romney, Apostle Boyd K. Packer and Apostle Gordon B. Hinckley. (Photo by Jed A. Clark)

7. Blood Atonement. What about Brigham Young's teaching that certain sins required personal blood atonement? When pressed on the issue of whether or not this was practiced, Turley responded: "My personal belief is that during Joseph Smith's time period, based on statements in the Bible, Joseph Smith said that when men shed blood, their blood should be shed. . . . And I think that when you got into the Brigham Young times, that scripture was taken literally for a time."

Turley then discussed blood atonement in relationship to capital punishment. However, this ignores all the other times blood atonement was advocated for sins other than murder, such as adultery, theft, marrying a black woman, apostasy, etc.²⁷ One example of such preaching is Young's sermon in 1857:

Now take a person in this congregation who has knowledge with regard to being saved . . . 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 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 or woman in this house but what would say, "**shed my blood** that I may be saved and exalted with the Gods?"

. . . Will you love your brothers and 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**? . . . 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 . . . 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 . . . 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. . . . **This is loving our neighbor 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**. . . ."²⁸

When pressed about whether Blood Atonement had ever been carried out, Turley responded: "I think it's possible." He then moved on to the problems of the first vision.

8. First Vision. If Smith was persecuted by the locals for saying he saw God and Jesus in 1820 why isn't there any mention in early church publications of that vision? Most members of the church in 1830 "hadn't even heard" about an 1820 vision. Today the 1820 vision is presented as crucial to the founding of Mormonism yet early converts didn't seem to know about it. Why not?

In relation to Smith's claim of persecution for telling the first vision story, Turley responded that the simple fact of the Methodist minister scoffing at Smith's vision could have seemed like persecution to him. "From the vantage point of others it may not have seemed like a big deal, but to a young boy, it seemed like a big deal."

Turley commented, "In terms of church history, when people tell any kind of an account of history, it's always selective. If I ask you a question, tell me about your years in high school, the story you tell me may be different than the story I get from your high school boyfriend or another student in your class."

But this ignores the problem of Smith himself giving several different versions of the 1820 vision, in which not just a few minor points change, but rather some of the most important ones, such as: the purpose of the prayer, the date, who appears in the vision (Jesus, angels, or God and Jesus), and the message that was delivered to young Joseph. In the only account in Smith's own hand, in his private 1832 journal, he states that "the Lord" appeared, but nothing about God the Father. This account was not made public for over 100 years. In 1835 he mentioned to an acquaintance that many angels appeared in the first vision. But this was not printed until many years later. In addition, the account currently printed at the back of the

27 Jerald and Sandra Tanner, *Mormonism—Shadow or Reality?* (Utah Lighthouse Ministry, 1987), "Blood Atonement," chapter 25; *Salt Lake City Messenger*, "Blood Atonement" (April 1997), no. 92; www.utlm.org/newsletters/no92.htm

28 Sermon by President Brigham Young, delivered in the Mormon Tabernacle, February 8, 1857; printed in the *Deseret News* (February 18, 1857); also reprinted in the *Journal of Discourses*, vol. 4, pp. 219-220.

Pearl of Great Price, in which God the Father and Jesus appear, was not printed until 1842, twenty-two years after the supposed event.²⁹

9. Censored Church History. “Do the leaders of the church really believe that they are actually inspired by God to act in such a way? Just to tell a selected, nice version of the church—the history of the church—in order to get more converts? Do they believe they are inspired to do this?”

Jensen responded: “Where for a long time we were a persecuted minority in America and our hope was to present our best face to the world. And our history was often written in what was called apologetic style. . . . And in doing that we were being selective. And we are at the time [now], I think, when our history could be told as completely and fully as technology can allow us to tell. . . . **There’s never been an attempt to suppress the history of the church or to tell the church’s history in some untrue way** to put it into an untrue light to gain some advantage, to gain converts, . . . Hans, I sense that about you. We haven’t betrayed you. **These things that you have learned about through the Internet, mainly, have always been known have always been out there in the books. The 19th wife [of Brigham Young]³⁰ wrote her story years ago.** It’s just that it’s published now, everybody’s reading it, they’ve found something new about the polygamy of president Young. It’s been there forever.”

Here the historians are cleverly sidestepping the issue. Yes, many of these problems have been known about for years, but not through official church publications. *Wife No. 19* was written by an apostate ex-wife of Brigham Young, hardly a book the church ever encouraged members to read. In 1945 Fawn Brodie, niece of LDS President David O. McKay, wrote the groundbreaking biography of Joseph Smith, *No Man Knows My History*, for which she was excommunicated. But Mormons have traditionally been told not to read it. Not only has the church hid its history it has discouraged its members from reading outside sources. Just read the various copies of our *Salt Lake City Messenger* where we continually raise the issue of restricted and/or edited information from the church.³¹

29 Jerald and Sandra Tanner, *Changing World of Mormonism*, “The First Vision,” (Moody Press, 1981), pp. 148-159, online at utlm.org. Also www.utlm.org/onlineresources/firstvision.htm

30 Ann Eliza Young, *Wife No. 19—The Story of A Life in Bondage, Being a Complete Exposé on Mormonism*, 1875.

31 *Salt Lake City Messenger*, nos. 100, 108, 109, 111; online at www.utlm.org/navnewsletters.htm

In the past it has only been *after* a problem becomes well-known (and thus more embarrassing) that the LDS church has decided to write about it. They have certainly not taken the lead in explaining the troubling parts of their past until it becomes critical. Why is it that only *now* the LDS church is finally making a greater attempt to tell its history “as completely and fully as technology can allow,” when they have had literally decades to do so? If the Swedish situation is any indicator, it must be that the Internet is causing pressure by finally making that history more readily available to the masses.

Even though, as Turley said, these things “have always been out there in the books,” the concern of the Swedish contingency (as with other questioning Mormons) is not so much whether or not the history is out there, but why has it not been given to them by their own church in the first place? What is intended by Turley to be a note of reassurance only makes the shock of discovery more painful for the questioners. If there has “never been an attempt to suppress the history of the church,” as he says, then why have sincere believers like Mattsson had to resort to the Internet and to non-approved sources to get that history?

In short, why is the LDS church needing to play catch-up to what outside historians have been writing about for decades? When Mormon historians have tried to write more fully about the embarrassing parts of the church’s past, it has often resulted in the person being disfellowshipped, excommunicated, receiving warnings from church leadership, or forced retirement from church employment.³²

A member then raised the issue of the Mountain Meadows Massacre, carried out by faithful Mormons against a wagon train of non-Mormons from Arkansas, in southern Utah in 1857, and its cover-up. Turley responded that he is currently “writing a book” on the period after the massacre that will answer that question. He was further questioned as to whether or not the church covered up the massacre.

Turley’s answer was “Did the Church hide it? At the time—short answer—you need to read the book for the long answer. . . . The short answer is that at the time of the Mountain Meadows Massacre, when Brigham Young found out about it, the US Army was on the door of Salt Lake City getting ready to come in and basically massacre his people, that was Brigham Young’s feeling. Ok? So the Mountain Meadows Massacre was the last thing he wanted to talk about under those circumstances. Ok, let’s move on.”

32 Jerald and Sandra Tanner, *The Mormon Purge*, (Utah Lighthouse Ministry, 1993).

Thus we see that Brigham Young and the church did cover-up the massacre “at the time.” It has been covering up embarrassing events in its past since the beginning, and they are still restricting access to several documents relating to the massacre. In 2008 Turley and two associates published *Massacre at Mountain Meadows*. At that time Turley said he was working on a sequel dealing with the aftermath of the massacre, which would be the book he mentioned to the Swedes. As of September 20, 2013, Turley’s book has not appeared in print.

10. *Should members know all the truth?* One person mentioned Apostle Boyd K. Packer’s statements in the PBS television program *The Mormons*, done in 2007.³³ “Elder Packer says there, it is not good for the members to know all the truth. . . . He said as a watchman on the tower he might stop things that could hurt.”

Packer made a similar statement in 1981 to a group of LDS Church educators at BYU:

There is a temptation for the writer or the teacher of Church history to want to tell everything, whether it is worthy or faith promoting or not. Some things that are true are not very useful.³⁴

The historian responded, “The question is really, is all truth useful?” Turley later commented, “Watchmen on the tower. This is something, as you mentioned, President Packer talks about a lot. I think his concern is that providing information to people in a way that’s going to destroy their faith carries with it a responsibility. That’s all I’m going to say about that.” This seems to be an admission that full disclosure of LDS history could “hurt” a member’s testimony, which contradicts the idea that they really have answers for the historical problems. Only a dearth of answers would “hurt.”

11. *Priesthood Restoration.* The next question related to the lack of early documents reporting the appearance of angels regarding priesthood restoration. “One thing that really bothers me is the lack of contemporary sources for the angelic visitations [of John the Baptist and Peter, James and John relating to the Priesthood]. I understand from both Michael Quinn and Bushman, they say, as I understand, there are sources from 1820–

1830—affidavits, letters, minutes—but none of them ever mentions any angelic visitations or a priesthood. . . . So I wonder, why are there not any contemporary testimonies. Or are there?”

Turley tried to smooth over the issue: “Number one, the church in its earliest days was essentially a church of oral tradition. Ok? People did not write things. . . . Joseph Smith really starts writing around—our first revelation for which we have documentary evidence is in the late 1820s. So the first thing he starts writing is scripture. And then, early revelations do have references to angelic visitations. Section 20 of the *Doctrine and Covenants*, article and covenants of the church, is an example of that. *D&C* section 20 has references to angelic visitations.”

Turley just admitted that records of Smith’s revelations were being kept “in the late 1820’s” so why isn’t there a contemporary account of the so-called priesthood restoration? It seems rather odd that Turley mentions *D&C* section 20 to support angelic visits. The only angel specifically mentioned in section 20, verses 6-8, relate to the angel who told Smith of the plates.

Both section 20 and 27 in the current *D&C* were edited in 1835 to include references to angels, priesthood restoration and offices. Specifically, verses 65-67, relating to the “high priesthood,” were not in section 20 when it was first published in the 1833 *Book of Commandments*. Section 27, dated 1830, of the current *Doctrine and Covenants* recounts many angelic visions, including Peter, James and John. But these references to angels and priesthood were backdated and added to this section in 1835. Section 27 is now twice as long as the original printing in 1833. Clearly, claims of Peter, James and John restoring priesthood authority were not known in 1829 or 1830.³⁵ Again, the historians provided no answer to the question.

12. *Blacks and Priesthood.* One person questioned the background of the revelation granting priesthood to Blacks in 1978. Hadn’t there been earlier efforts to change the doctrine? At one point the questioner mentioned D. Michael Quinn’s book but didn’t give a specific reference. According to Quinn’s book, *Mormon Hierarchy: Extensions of Power*, in 1969 Apostle Hugh B. Brown “‘was able to get a proposal allowing full priesthood for Blacks approved by the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles.’ With church president David O. McKay unable to function, the way was now open for the two counselors and the Quorum of Twelve to issue a joint

³³ Helen Whitney, dir., *The Mormons*, (PBS, 2007); www.pbs.org/mormons/

³⁴ Boyd K. Packer, “The Mantle is Far Far Greater than the Intellect,” (August 22, 1981), CES Symposium, online: <http://tinyurl.com/ayu6gcg>

³⁵ Gregory A. Prince, *Power From On High*, (Signature Books, 1995), pp. 3-30; Tanner, *Changing World of Mormonism*, chapter 16; online at www.utlm.org

declaration granting priesthood to those of black African ancestry.” However, Apostle Harold B. Lee opposed the matter, and “persuaded the Quorum of Twelve to rescind its vote,” which delayed giving the priesthood to Blacks for many years.³⁶ One Swede asked, “Is this true that there were some apostles that went against the question to give the priesthood to the Blacks?” When he was on his mission in the seventies he remembers hearing Mark E. Petersen talk “a lot about the blacks and the pre-existence and they are damned and so on because they were black.” Yet, now those teachings would be considered false doctrine.

Later Turley responded, “The June 1978 revelation has a history to it like all revelations. You have this period of time in which saints are studying it out in the mind and they eventually flower as revelation.” The questioner persisted, referring again to Quinn’s book, “But my question was, was it three of the apostles that didn’t agree with David O. McKay?” To which Turley replied, “I haven’t looked at the sources myself. I don’t know.” And that was the end of the discussion on blacks and priesthood.

13. Bad Temple Experiences. One member wondered why some people have a bad experience when they first attend the Endowment Ceremony? He commented, “Anyway, when I went to the temple the first time, it was 1970 [when the Endowment ritual still contained the death oaths] in Switzerland. And after being in there the first day, I was terrified. I couldn’t sleep at night. I thought, what is this, you know? There was a black hole in my heart and I had nightmares the whole week. I thought, what is this? Have I been deceived?” Later he added, “Why do we have such a bad feeling when we come to the temple? If the Holy Ghost was there this would give a testimony, you feel good . . .”

Marlin Jensen responded by telling of his daughter’s first experience at the temple. “I remember sitting with our first daughter, . . . after her first temple endowment which I attended with her [prior to the changes in 1990]. . . . I think my little daughter was quite worthy, but she was so disturbed, I’ll say. So surprised by the nature of what happened there that I’m not sure the Holy Ghost had a chance to really help her that day. I remember sitting with her in the celestial room while she cried and said, dad what’s this all about? And I wish I had done a better job. She has persisted and I said to her if you’ll keep coming and keep learning and keep praying about it, you’ll [words unclear] and loves what she feels

there. But it’s taken some time. It [witness of the Holy Spirit] isn’t a tap we can always turn on.” To which the member responded, “I think what you’re saying now is your answer to everything. If we keep doing it, we will feel good about it.”

Interestingly, Jensen didn’t mention that the ceremony was changed in 1990 and 2005, removing many of the elements that disturbed people.³⁷ Evidently the church realized the ceremony, as first presented by Joseph Smith, was too graphic, too Masonic, too tied to nineteenth-century attitudes, and needed to be rewritten to appeal to new members.

14. Vikings and Book of Mormon. Why is there no evidence that the Book of Mormon people ever existed? A member asked, “We had some Vikings visit North America about 1000 years ago, and today we know exactly where they lived actually, there are archeological evidence that they leave there, etc. So what about all the millions of people who have been Lamanites or Nephites . . . What kind of evidence can you show that [they] actually exist?” He later commented, “I mean there were millions of people building cities and creating wagons with wheels, and horses, and had so many things, weapons destroying things . . . so I guess there should be some traces, somewhere, in the whole of Americas if they ever existed.” He also asked about the lack of DNA evidence for Israelites in pre-Columbus America.

Turley combined the issues of lack of archaeological support for the Book of Mormon, DNA problems, and the lack of evidence for Semitic people in America prior to Columbus. “As you know, there are cultural ruins all over the Americas. The question is, were these Book of Mormon peoples or not? Some people have tried to answer that using the DNA to say maybe these were Book of Mormon people, maybe they were not. Are there any DNA experts here? I’m gonna give you my best short answer on DNA.” To which a member called out, “Is it the same as FAIR and FARMS?”³⁸

Turley responded “Um. It may be.” He then went into a long discussion of tracing particular family lines, which isn’t quite the same as determining origins of people groups. “We’re continuing to learn over time. The body of types of DNA for these people is growing. With this one, we have no way of knowing the answer. We do not know what Lehi’s DNA was.” But this sidesteps the

³⁷ *Salt Lake City Messenger*, nos. 75, 76 and 104, online at utlm.org

³⁸ FAIR is an organization of faithful LDS members, but is not officially connected to the church. FARMS (now the Neal Maxwell Institute) is part of the BYU and thus an official division of the LDS Church.

³⁶ D. Michael Quinn, *Mormon Hierarchy: Extension of Power*, (Signature Books, 1997), p. 14.

issue that Native American DNA shows they descended from Asians, not Semitic people.

The member wasn't satisfied with Turley's answer. "I actually don't think that's correct according to scientific evidence today. I think you actually can trace back to with DNA and tell for instance where the Swedish people are coming from or where the Asian people are coming from." Again, the historians could supply no official answer to the Book of Mormon problems.

For those interested in reading further on the DNA issue, Simon Southerton, molecular biologist, and author of *Losing a Lost Tribe*, challenged Turley's comments in his blog of July 28, 2013. Southerton summarized, "LDS apologists didn't need ancient Asian DNA to be convinced that American Indians are essentially all descended from Asian ancestors. So why do we need ancient Israelite DNA? . . . The other obvious problem is that we don't have any Native American DNA lineages that are even candidate Israelite DNA lineages. Those that don't belong to the five lineage families (A to D, X) are derived from Western European or African populations and arrived after Columbus."³⁹

15. Adam-God. The last question related to Brigham Young's Adam-God sermons, teaching that there is a hierarchy of gods, and our Heavenly Father is Adam, the God to whom we pray. Why did he teach something that was opposed by some of the apostles and seemed to divide the church? Why wasn't Young able to convince the others that his doctrine was right? "There was a lot of Apostles and leaders that didn't agree to what Brigham had to say so if, I don't know, what is church opinion on Adam-God out there in Utah and why didn't they clear it up if it is the way I think they—that he actually taught that Adam is not Heavenly Father, but why couldn't he make other apostles understand that?"

Turley later responded, "Well, it's complicated, again, because you've got a lot of sources. I haven't seen an official church position that goes back to deconstruct all those sources. So as a historian I have to say if you look at the evidence sometimes it's a little squishy. . . . you can find evidence that goes both directions." Again, the historians were not able to provide an answer as to why the president of the church would teach a false view of God from the pulpit, in his role as prophet.

Preaching in 1873 Brigham Young declared, "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.** . . . He brought one of his wives with him, and she was called Eve . . ." Further on he explained that Adam was the father of our spirits.⁴⁰

Brigham's apostles understood what he was saying. Preaching in 1856 Apostle Heber C. Kimball taught, "I have learned by experience that there is but one God that pertains to this people, and He is the God that pertains to this earth—the **first man**. That first man sent his own Son to redeem the world, to redeem his brethren; . . ."⁴¹

In 1877 Brigham Young even introduced the Adam-God doctrine into the LDS endowment ceremony in the temple at St. George, Utah, which was the only temple then in operation. This lecture was a summary of the theological meaning of the ritual, including the Adam-God doctrine. Young explained that Adam and Eve were once mortals on some other world and after receiving their exaltation the gods sent them to form this world for the habitation of their spirit children, of whom Jesus was the first born. The lecture also taught that Adam was the literal father of Jesus in the flesh. While the original manuscript of the lecture at the veil is not publicly available, L. John Nuttall, Young's scribe, recorded it in his diary:



St. George, Utah, LDS Temple

In the creation the Gods entered into an agreement about forming this earth & putting Michael or Adam upon it. These thing[s] of which I have been speaking are what are termed the mysteries of godliness . . .

We have heard a great deal about Adam and Eve, how they were formed &c. . . . He was made just the same way you and I are made but on another earth. Adam was an immortal being when he came on this earth. He had lived on an earth similar to ours. . . . and gained his resurrection and his exaltation . . . And [he] had begotten all the spirit[s] that was to come to this earth. And Eve[,] our common Mother who is the Mother of all living[,] bore those spirits in the celestial world. And when this earth was organized by Elohim, Jehovah & Michael[,] who is Adam our common Father, Adam & Eve had the privilege to continue the work of Progression [and] consequently came to this earth . . .

39 Simon Southerton Blog, <http://tinyurl.com/l89an6b>; Simon G. Southerton, "Answers to Apologetic Claims about DNA and the Book of Mormon," Institute for Religious Research, <http://mit.irr.org/answers-apologetic-claims-about-dna-and-book-of-mormon>; *Salt Lake City Messenger* (November 2004), no. 103, online at www.utlm.org/

40 Discourse by Brigham Young, *Deseret Weekly News*, (June 18, 1873), photo in *Mormonism—Shadow or Reality?* p. 176.

41 *Journal of Discourses*, Heber C. Kimball, (June 29, 1856), vol. 4, p. 1.

Father Adam's oldest son (Jesus the Saviour) who is the heir of the family is Father Adams first begotten in the spirit World, who according to the flesh is the only begotten[,] as it is written. (In his [Adam's] divinity[,] he having gone back into the spirit World and come in the spirit to Mary[,] and she conceived[,] for when Adam and Eve got through with their Work in this earth, they did not lay their bodies down in the dust, but returned to the spirit World from whence they come.)⁴²

While the Adam-God doctrine has dropped into obscurity, the polygamist splinter groups and some Mormons have continued to believe the doctrine. In 1976 President Spencer W. Kimball denounced the teaching in the October LDS Conference:

Another matter. We hope that you who teach in the various organizations, whether on the campuses or in our chapels, will always teach the orthodox truth. We warn you against the dissemination of doctrines which are not according to the scriptures and which are alleged to have been taught by some of the General Authorities of past generations. Such, for instance, is the Adam-God theory. We denounce that theory and hope that everyone will be cautioned against this and other kinds of false doctrine.⁴³

This raises the question: When does a prophet speak for God? Young, as God's prophet, declared the Adam-God doctrine to be a revelation. Kimball, as God's prophet, declared it to be false doctrine.

More Questions Than Answers

After the initial listing of their fifteen questions one member asked if they could get references later so that they could check things out. Jensen responded, "We've brought a handout for you. These are the five very best websites for authentic answers to those questions. Let me just say if you spend as much time on these five websites as you spent on other websites cause I have visited as has Brother Turley some of these anti-Mormon websites. And they're very dark to me."

While we don't have the web list that was handed out it is assumed it was the same one passed out in 2012 as part of the Swedish Rescue letter mentioned later.⁴⁴

42 Devery S. Anderson, *The Development of LDS Temple Worship, 1846–2000*, (Salt Lake City: Signature Books, 2011), pp. 36-37; David John Buerger, *The Mysteries of Godliness: A History of Mormon Temple Worship*, (Salt Lake City: Smith Research, 1994), pp. 110-111.

43 Spencer W. Kimball, "Our Own Liahona," *Ensign* (November 1976): p. 77; *Mysteries of Godliness*, pp. 110-111.

44 It is assumed these were the same five web sites listed in the March 2012 Swedish Rescue documents; online at www.mormonthink.com/swedish-rescue.htm

However, the Swedes immediately wanted to know if these were "official" answers. One member objected, "I tried to find the church own versions about these things." To which Richard Turley responded, "They don't exist."

Since these historians were already aware of the historical problems bothering the Swedes, one wonders why the historians arrived at the meeting with no prepared answers? These were not new issues. Most of these questions had been troubling various Mormons for decades. In fact, as young Mormons Jerald and I were looking for answers to these issues in 1959 and 1960.⁴⁵ The LDS Church has had ample time to produce official answers to these questions.

On July 22, 2013, one person posted this observation after reading the transcript of the meeting:

Worked my way through the transcript. I could really feel the frustration of the Swedes as question after question went unanswered. Far as I can tell the church leaders traveled 36 hours out of their way to answer the groups questions with:

- We have the answer but we just don't have time to explain
- We're working on it
- I hope to know the answer to that someday.⁴⁶

In his summary of the evening, Marlin Jensen stated, "And when I look at those of you, Hans, you included, whom I know best here tonight, who are struggling with these things, my heart goes out to you. . . . I wish deep down we might have helped you more than we have tonight. But I want to say to you as the Savior said to his disciples after he fed the 5000. . . . He turned to his disciples and said, will you leave me also? And what did Peter answer? That's right. To whom should we go, Lord? For thou hast the words of eternal life. And that's what I want to say in my final testimony tonight. Where will you go, those of you who have doubts? . . . though there are trials and tribulations and unanswered questions, it is the best way of life, . . ."

Jensen sees LDS truth claims and historical contradictions as secondary to whether or not Mormonism improves your life. However, the message taken to the world by the 75,000 LDS missionaries is that all of Joseph Smith's claims are true. In an interview for PBS in 2007, President Gordon B. Hinckley boldly stated:

45 See *Salt Lake City Messenger*, "Jerald Tanner's Quest for Truth," 3 part series, issues 108, 109, 111; online at: www.utlm.org/navnewsletters.htm

46 MormonDiscussions.com, see online <http://tinyurl.com/mq4kh7o>

Well, it's either true or false. If it's false, we're engaged in a great fraud. If it's true, it's the most important thing in the world. Now, that's the whole picture. It is either right or wrong, true or false, fraudulent or true. And that's exactly where we stand, with a conviction in our hearts that it is true: that Joseph went into the [Sacred] Grove; that he saw the Father and the Son; that he talked with them; that Moroni came; that the Book of Mormon was translated from the plates; that the priesthood was restored by those who held it anciently. That's our claim. That's where we stand, and that's where we fall, if we fall. But we don't. We just stand secure in that faith.⁴⁷

But for many at the 2010 meeting the historians' answers were not convincing. One person who attended the meeting commented:

The big take away for me at this meeting was that the questions I was having were legit. The history that was troubling me were events that really happened. . . . One comment of the meeting with E. Jensen and Bro Turley was that in many instances we were told that there wasn't enough time to fully answer the concerns. The paradox was that the Area general authority took almost an hour at the end [in Swedish], sharing the Korihor story [from the Book of Mormon] telling us not to disturb our friends in the church and make a decision to stay or leave. . . . For me it was valuable as it forced me to make a decision I haven't regretted. Me and my wife have removed our names from the LDS records. We have also removed our children's name from the records.

After years of internal conflict, and sorrow I am finally at peace. At the end of the day my reasons for being a member of the church was because I was raised to believe that the claims the LDS church makes are literally true. If they are not, I in fact felt like I was supporting a lie by being a member.⁴⁸

Two Years Later

With growing unrest among the Swedish Mormons, in March of 2012 Ingvar Olsson, Area Seventy for Sweden, sent a document to various church leaders in the country dubbed "The Swedish Rescue."⁴⁹ In it was a letter from LDS Historian Marlin Jensen dated January 21, 2012:

⁴⁷ *The Mormons*, (PBS, July 2007); online at: www.pbs.org/mormons/

⁴⁸ Comments by Jonathan Bautista, *Mormon Stories*, (July 22, 2013): <http://mormonstories.org/hans-mattsson/comment-page-1/#comments>

⁴⁹ <http://www.mormonthink.com/swedish-rescue.htm>

Letter from Church History Department

"The Swedish Rescue"
Salt Lake City, January 21, 2012.

I think we all agree that in your efforts to rescue those who are struggling, no "program" is needed. Rather, priesthood leaders who hold keys, who are filled with charity, and who seek the guidance of the Spirit, will know in each case how best to proceed. The following summary of the principles that we discussed during your visit may be helpful to you and local priesthood leaders;

- (1) **The Church does not hide historical facts.** In fact, it makes every effort to be open and honest about its past and current actions.
- (2) The internet and digital records now make information about the Church available to many who because of language and other limitations have not previously known of this information. This does not mean that such information was hidden by the Church; **it was simply not generally available.**
- (3) Joseph Smith and the prophets who succeeded him were not wicked or deceiving men. Joseph did not become a "fallen prophet." He and all other prophets of this dispensation have **human weaknesses.** They have often admitted this and the scriptures sometimes confirm that God is not pleased with them. However, they worthily exercised their priesthood keys and led the Church in their time as directed by God through revelation. This is true of President Thomas S. Monson today.
- (4) *Obtaining or regaining* a testimony of Joseph Smith as a prophet of God and of the restoration of the gospel through him is always essentially a spiritual quest. Nephi's reminder to his older brother of the Lord's words provides a good description of the path each must walk: "If ye will **not harden your hearts**, and ask me in faith, believing that ye shall receive, with diligence in **keeping my commandments**, surely these things shall be made known unto you", (1 Nephi 15:11).
- (5) **In working with individual members who are expressing doubts, priesthood leaders should (a) provide the best possible answers to the questions the members are asking,** (b) teach the spiritual path each must walk to gain or regain a testimony, helping the members to remember past spiritual witnesses and to **avoid contact with evil influences,** and (c) emphasize that faith is a conscious choice that each must make.
- (6) As guided by the Spirit, the scriptures, and Handbook 1 (section 6.7.3 material on Apostasy), priesthood leaders may need to take **disciplinary action** with those members who persist in publicly opposing the Church and its leaders after they have been lovingly worked with and corrected by their bishop or higher authority. Alma's counsel is important in this regard: "Now **repentance** could not come unto men except there were a **punishment . . .**" (Alma 42:16). The three-point approach [1. Prevent, 2. Regain and 3. **Facts & Answers**] . . . formulated after our meeting may be a very good framework to share with priesthood leaders along with the principles set out above. I think this sums up the things we agreed to during our meeting. We join our faith and prayers with yours that we can make difference in the lives of those Swedish Saints whose faith is being tested. May the Lord bless you and your associates there, is our prayer.

Sincerely your brother

Elder Marlin K. Jensen⁵⁰

⁵⁰ <http://www.mormonthink.com/swedish-rescue.htm>

Notice that point number 5 encourages the local priesthood leaders to “provide the best possible answers to the questions the members are asking.” Yet the 2012 material sent to the Swedish leaders did not contain official answers to any of the questions raised in the 2010 meeting.

The author of *MormonThink* summed up the Swedish Rescue document in these words:

Nowhere in the Swedish Rescue does it mention any specific problem like polyandry, Book of Mormon anachronisms, linguistic issues, archeological problems, DNA studies, Kinderhook Plates, Book of Abraham translation, etc. . . .

We are troubled that the rescue document implies that the true information about the church’s history is somehow evil and shouldn’t be looked at. It uses the phrase “avoid contact with evil influences.” How can looking at historical facts be considered “evil influences”? It talks about the need to “repent”—why would someone reading true, church history need to repent? These subtle labelings seems to be an effort to categorize any research that isn’t faith-promoting as sinful.⁵¹

The Swedish Rescue document also included suggested web sites for members to use to find answers:

On the link below can all learn about church history, as a result of continued work of CHD [Church History Department].

<https://history.lds.org/?lang=eng>

Each can be on the websites follow the Church’s history, such as reading *Times & Seasons* all the numbers from 1830. All material on church websites is officially approved.

CHD recommend the following websites, which CHD itself uses. These websites are not only focused on the history of the church.

The first LDS FAQ <http://ldsfaq.byu.edu/>

The second *Encyclopedia of Mormonism* Online <http://eom.byu.edu/>

The third FAIR http://en.fairmormon.org/Main_Page

The fourth Neal A. Maxwell Institute <http://maxwellinstitute.byu.edu/>

The fifth More Good Foundation <http://www.moregoodfoundation.org/>⁵²

Unfortunately, many people find these sites are still avoiding or obscuring the tough questions. In the comments section of the 2013 *Mormon Stories* podcast of an interview with Hans Mattsson, one person wrote:

When I first started my “crisis of faith” search, I stuck almost exclusively to FAIR’s website. Then I started to venture out a little to mormonthink.com. I could not believe how much FAIR whitewashed or left out facts that didn’t tell the whole story. If you want coddling then go to FAIR or BYU type sites . . . if you want the unvarnished facts then go to mormonthink.com or utlm.org.

I want to know the whole truth so I can make informed decision . . . I mean, we’re only talking about our entire lives and family relationships, and to many, our eternal life with God. Or, we can simply live in naive, blind ignorance and wonder why things don’t add up.⁵³

After the members had already waited almost two years for answers to the 15 questions of 2010, the “Swedish Rescue” document was all the answer they received. Evidently the “Rescue” plan failed to help the troubled members and was quietly dropped.

Front Page News

After waiting years for answers, Hans Mattsson decided to go public with his story. And this brings us full circle, back to the July 21, 2013, article on the front page of the *New York Times*, “Some Mormons Search the Web and Find Doubt.” The article interviews Hans Mattsson, Greg Prince and Terryl Givens— all Mormons—and discusses the major stumbling blocks for the Swedes: the method of translating the Book of Mormon from a stone in a hat, priesthood restriction on Blacks, translation problems for the Book of Abraham, Joseph Smith’s polygamy and polyandry, and the Mountain Meadows Massacre. The article states:

Eric Hawkins, a church spokesman, said that “every church faces this challenge,” adding, “The answer is not to try to silence critics, **but to provide as much information** and as much support as possible to those who may be affected.” . . . But Mr. Mattsson and others say the disillusionment is infecting the church’s best and brightest.

The *Times* article also mentions special seminars this year entitled “Crucible of Doubt” presented by LDS author Terryl Givens, and his wife, Fiona, in Europe and America. Givens was quoted as saying, “Sometimes they (questioning Mormons) are just this side of leaving,

51 www.mormonthink.com/swedish-rescue.htm

52 www.mormonthink.com/swedish-rescue.htm

53 Lance M., *Mormon Stories*, (July 25, 2013): <http://mormonstories.org/hans-mattsson/comment-page-1/#comments>

and sometimes they are simply faithful members who are looking for clarity and understanding to add to their faith.”

However, judging by reports of the seminars, Givens is not giving any clearer answers than those offered by the historians to the Swedes in 2010.⁵⁴

The article quoted Greg Prince, author of *Power from on High: The Development of Mormon Priesthood*, that Mr. Mattsson “is, as far as I know, the highest-ranking church official who has gone public with deep concerns, who has had a faith crisis and come forward to say he’s going to talk about it because maybe that will help us all to resolve it.”

Also in the article Richard Bushman, author of *Joseph Smith: Rough Stone Rolling*, was quoted as saying, “You would be amazed at the number of Mormons who don’t think Joseph Smith practiced polygamy. It just wasn’t talked about. It was never mentioned in church periodicals. That was policy.”

The article continues:

In the last 10 or 15 years, he [Bushman] said, “the church has come to realize that transparency and candor and historical accuracy are really the only way to go.”

Unfortunately, that wasn’t the experience of the Swedes over the last eight years. At the end of the article Mattsson is quoted as saying, “I don’t want to hurt the church, I just want the truth.”

Mattsson’s Interview with John Dehlin

Another amazing event was John Dehlin’s interview with Hans Mattsson, which aired on Dehlin’s podcast series *Mormon Stories* on July 22, 2013.⁵⁵ Although Dehlin’s interview with Mattsson was posted after the 2013 *Times* article, it was evidently recorded prior to the article. Mattsson explained that he had listened to earlier podcasts of *Mormon Stories* and felt it was time to share his experiences.

In part 5 of the Dehlin interview Mr. Mattsson answered a number of questions about where he stood at this point. He mentioned the number of spiritual experiences he had as an active, believing Mormon and now doesn’t know how to reconcile those with his current knowledge.

⁵⁴ MormonThink.com, online at: <http://mormonthink.com/glossary/crucible-of-doubt.htm>
Simon Southerton Blog: <http://tinyurl.com/mk5s8bq>

⁵⁵ “430-434: Hans Mattsson — Former LDS Area Authority Seventy (Sweden)”, *Mormon Stories*, (July 22, 2013); online at: <http://mormonstories.org/hans-mattsson/>

He sees that the Book of Mormon has inspiring passages but wonders if it is an actual historical document? He questions the existence of the gold plates; how the Book of Mormon was supposedly translated; who and where the Lamanites are; whether Jesus actually came to America; why things like horses and steel are mentioned in the Book of Mormon despite the absence of archaeological evidence; why passages from the King James Bible so abundantly fill the Book of Mormon; and why the Book of Abraham seems to be more a product of Joseph Smith’s own mind than an actual translation of the papyri he purchased.

Hans still believes in God and Jesus but he has many questions. As to there being only one true church he wishes the LDS were more open and accepting of others. He feels leaders in other churches are inspired as well.

Dehlin asked if it is possible to take a middle path, not believing all of Mormonism but still stay a part of the community? Mattsson shared that he and his wife had visited other churches but felt uncomfortable, not knowing the people or their type of service. He enjoys visiting the ward and seeing old friends, but it is difficult when you no longer believe it all the same as they do. This has been a very hard journey for him and his wife but he is glad to know the truth even when it is troubling. He advised couples who were struggling with these issues to place their marriage first, don’t put the marriage in jeopardy. Be open and honest with one another.

Mattsson hopes that someday the LDS Church will be open about its past and more welcoming to those with differences. He waited until 2013 to come forward with his story because he was worried about its repercussions, but has faith that God will take care of them. He doesn’t believe the church will take action against him because he is not advocating that people should apostatize, he just wants more openness and an accepting spirit towards those who struggle. His wife shared a spiritual experience they recently had. A man came jogging past their house, then turned around and came back with a message for them. He just felt impressed to share with them that God loves them. He was part of a local church, wasn’t Mormon and as far as the Mattssons knew, he didn’t know anything about them.⁵⁶

2011 Survey of Doubting Mormons

Beginning in the Fall of 2011 John Dehlin, a graduate student of clinical and counseling psychology at Utah State University, conducted an online survey of 3000

⁵⁶ *Mormon Stories*, part 5; <http://mormonstories.org/hans-mattsson/>

Mormons “who at one time believed their Church was true, but no longer believe,” titled *Understanding Mormon Disbelief*.⁵⁷ Almost half of the participants reported their current status as agnostic/atheist/humanist, while only 11% identified themselves as Christian (non-Mormon).⁵⁸

The study found that “on average, survey respondents cited 15 major factors (with scores of 3 or 4) and 13 minor factors (scores of 1 or 2) as having an impact, indicating that there was not simply one or two issues that led to disbelief; on the contrary, many issues appeared to ‘stack up’ until belief was lost.”⁵⁹ The top seven historical problems leading to disbelief were:

- Polygamy/Polyandry
- Book of Abraham
- Blacks and the Priesthood
- DNA and the Book of Mormon
- Masonic influences in the temple ceremony
- Multiple, conflicting versions of the First Vision
- Anachronisms in the Book of Mormon (e.g. horses, steel, etc.)

Peggy Stack, writing for the *Salt Lake Tribune*, in 2012, reported on the survey:

Surprised by what they find so easily online, more and more members of the Utah-based Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints are encountering crises of faith. Some even leave the fold and, feeling betrayed, join the ranks of Mormon opponents.

It’s a growing problem, acknowledges LDS general authority Marlin Jensen, the faith’s outgoing church historian, and one Mormon leaders are working to confront.

“Never before have we had this information age, with social networking and bloggers publishing unvetted points of view,” Jensen said in an interview Monday. “The church is concerned about misinformation and distorted information, but we are doing better and trying harder to get our story told in an accurate way.”

“I definitely get the sense that this is a real crisis,” said Mormon scholar and writer Terryl Givens. “It is an epidemic.”

57 John Dehlin, *Understanding Mormon Disbelief*, online survey and analysis (March 2012); see online: <http://tinyurl.com/mr4moto>

58 This may not be a good indication of the actual percentage of those who leave the LDS Church and still embrace Christianity since the survey was mainly publicized on sites rarely frequented by those who have moved on to another faith system.

59 Dehlin, *Understanding Mormon Disbelief*, p. 8.

The article continues:

There is a “discrepancy between a church history that has been selectively rendered through the Church Education System and Sunday school manuals, and a less-flattering version universally accessible on the Internet,” Givens wrote in an email from Virginia. “The problem is not so much the discovery of particular details that are deal breakers for the faithful; the problem is a loss of faith and trust in an institution that was less tha[n] forthcoming to begin with.”

Another issue is the “veneration for Smith and other leaders that imposes on them an idealized portrait of goodness and inerrancy out of all proportion to Smith’s own self-understanding of his role,” said Givens, a professor of literature and religion at the University of Richmond.” . . .

LDS scholar Richard Bushman, author of the critically acclaimed biography *Joseph Smith: Rough Stone Rolling*, has become a kind of historical therapist, he wrote in an email from his home in New York, “counseling with distraught wives and parents or disaffected Mormons themselves.”

For those who discover unwelcome information about the church’s history online, Bushman said, “the whole picture changes in a flash — like those optical illusions that show a beautiful woman and a hag.” . . .⁶⁰

Following Stack’s report, the *Salt Lake Tribune* posted:

Why some Mormons leave

In a nonscientific online survey last fall, researchers at the Open Stories Foundation found that 81 percent cited loss of faith in Mormon founder Joseph Smith as a moderate or strong factor in their no longer believing in the LDS Church. Another 84 percent said they studied LDS history and lost their faith. About 79 percent lost faith in Mormonism’s founding scripture, the Book of Mormon.

The survey, which was posted on various LDS-related blogs and websites as well as Facebook, attracted more than 3,000 self-selected, nonrepresentative responses. It found that the two historical issues that most negatively affected belief in the faith were “the Book of Abraham” — a Mormon text that Smith said was based on Egyptian papyri he obtained — and polygamy, which the church abandoned in 1890.⁶¹

60 Peggy Stack, *Salt Lake Tribune*, “Mormons Tackling Tough Questions in their History,” (February 3, 2012), online at <http://www.sltrib.com/sltrib/news/53408134-78/church-lds-mormon-faith.html.csp>

61 *Salt Lake Tribune*, (February 3, 2012), online comments following Peggy Stack’s article.

April 2013 LDS Conference

Possibly in response to the issues in Sweden, as well as to Dehlin's survey and the resulting news articles about those who are leaving the LDS Church, LDS Apostle Jeffrey R. Holland gave this admonition in the April 2013 annual church conference:

Be as candid about your questions as you need to be; life is full of them on one subject or another. But if you and your family want to be healed, don't let those questions stand in the way of faith working its miracle. . . . Brothers and sisters, this is a divine work in process, with the manifestations and blessings of it abounding in every direction, so **please don't hyperventilate if from time to time issues arise that need to be examined, understood, and resolved. . . . When doubt or difficulty come, do not be afraid to ask for help.** If we want it as humbly and honestly as this father did, we can get it. The scriptures phrase such earnest desire as being of "real intent," pursued "with full purpose of heart, acting no hypocrisy and no deception before God." I testify that in response to *that* kind of importuning, God will send help from both sides of the veil to strengthen our belief.⁶²

Contrary to Holland's assessment, most of the people we speak to who have researched the problems and sought answers from the LDS Church have not been satisfied with their answers.

Even though the church is continually posting more documents from the Joseph Smith papers on their web site they have not added any official FAQ page answering the most troubling historical issues. Instead, they seem to have moved the other way. In July of 2013 the LDS Church announced a new feature on their official web site www.lds.org. In an article titled "New LDS.org Search Harnesses Power of Google" it was stated that now members could search for information without fear of encountering troubling information:

Official, Safe Content

The new search provides a **more safe** and Church-specific search experience than Google, said Brother Ward. When you search from Google's website, the results you get back may or may not be **official content**, he explained. Some results might be links to members' personal blogs **or even anti-Church sites**.

The LDS.org search, however, only returns links to **official** Church-approved content that is currently available on LDS.org and other Church websites. And even though Google's technology is used, no user information is provided back to Google. "It provides a **safe, private, shock-free environment** to search for

approved gospel resources," said Brother Ward.

In other words, parents won't need to worry that they or their children might stumble onto **inappropriate content** listed in other search engine results.⁶³

An example of how the new search box leads seekers practically nowhere can be seen by simply typing in "Joseph Smith polygamy." You will receive links to several articles that do mention that Smith practiced polygamy, but these give no information as to how many wives he had, the circumstances of their marriages, or why he lied to his wife and the church about it.

Also try doing a search on "Joseph Smith polyandry." You will get a reference to the *D&C* 132:51, dated 1844, which hardly answers the question and leaves one wondering why someone thought that it was pertinent. Joseph Smith had already entered into many polyandrous relationships. This verse is directed at Emma:

D&C 132:51: Verily, I say unto you: A commandment I give unto mine handmaid, **Emma Smith**, your wife, whom I have given unto you, that **she stay herself and partake not of that which I commanded you to offer unto her**; for I did it, saith the Lord, to prove you all, as I did Abraham, and that I might require an offering at your hand, by covenant and sacrifice.

She is then told in the next verse to accept Joseph's wives who "are virtuous and pure," and in verse 54 she is told to "abide and cleave unto my servant Joseph, and **to none else**" or she will be "destroyed." Historians have speculated that Joseph was interested in marrying Jane Law and offered her husband, William Law, to Emma but then withdrew the offer.

George D. Smith, author of *Nauvoo Polygamy*, mentions a curious entry by William Law which states Joseph had "offered to furnish his wife, Emma, with a substitute . . . by way of compensation for his neglect of her." George Smith continues, "Whatever was behind the talk of Emma or William as a sacrificial offering for sake of harmony at home could not have gone over well with the Laws."⁶⁴

Try finding a discussion of Book of Mormon problems such as the lack of evidence that there were horses or chariots in America during the Book of Mormon time period. Or try finding a map for the geography of the Book of Mormon.

Those who have come across problematic issues of LDS history will soon tire of searching for answers on www.lds.org. Despite its self-declared effort to be

⁶³ "New LDS.org Search Harnesses Power of Google," online at <http://www.lds.org/church/news/new-ldsorg-search-harnesses-power-of-google>

⁶⁴ George D. Smith, *Nauvoo Polygamy*, p. 440.

⁶² Jeffrey R. Holland, "Lord, I Believe," online: <http://tinyurl.com/dyt42gu>

more open and accessible to questioners, the LDS church seems just as selective and silent as ever on the topics that matter most.

Other Instances of Apostasy

In January of 1981 we received correspondence from a family in New Zealand describing their exodus from Mormonism. By June 12, 1981, they reported that “nearly 70 Mormons” had come out of the Church:

On May 17th we sent to every Mormon Church leader and every Mormon on our mailing list in New Zealand a copy of our mailer . . .

The response has been amazing. . . . The most wonderful thing is that we have been able to assist nearly 70 Mormons out of Mormonism and many of them to the real Lord Jesus Christ. We have a Mormon Bishop, 5 returned missionaries and two stake high councilmen now on our mailing list. Every day some one approaches us and we are able to show them that Mormon claims are false. . . . It really touches us when a returned missionary who has just been shown all the evidence in your books that we have in our shop says with tears in his eyes “The Church is not true and I have wasted two years of my life and all that money for nothing.” Two days later he accepted the Lord and is being baptised at the end of this month. He is helping his mother and aunt out of the church. The aunt rang us earlier this week and we sent her a library copy of “Mormonism Shadow or Reality?” She phoned us back yesterday to say she had read it (must be a speed reader) and she now knows that the church is not true. She is a third generation Mormon!

Some people declare to us after seeing the truth and coming to know that Mormonism is not true. . . . “It’s Me getting out of a prison.” One young man who said those exact words has now accepted Christ and was baptised earlier this week.⁶⁵

An article published in 2003 by *Dialogue: A Journal of Mormon Thought*, illustrated a similar apostasy in Bremen, Germany, that predated the events in Sweden:

Then, in 1996, a member of the [Bremen] ward encountered a couple of disturbing articles about the early history of the church from the *Utah Lighthouse Ministry*, a conservative Protestant organization with an anti-Mormon mission. Attempting to come to terms with these, he asked friends in the ward for help and, in so doing, unintentionally started a wave of apostasy. Another brother translated parts of these articles into German and distributed them to members. In the fall discussion circles formed and letters were written to local and regional church authorities, questioning the official version of church history. The issues at stake were, first,

the different versions of the First Vision as evidence of a developing concept of God rather than an initially clear and complete picture through revelation; second, differences between the *Book of Commandments* and the *Doctrine and Covenants* as evidence of changed (or possibly forged) revelations; and, finally, controversy over whether the Book of Mormon was a fiction or a genuinely ancient record. The members were especially upset because these papers had been written twenty years earlier (when most of them had just begun their membership in the church), but evidently no church response or explanation had ever been made available.

In February 1997 the mission president tried to solve the problem in one stroke by inviting everyone to a question-and-answer evening. During that meeting tension became acute between the group questioning the church’s truthfulness regarding its history and members affirming their testimonies and high esteem for the Book of Mormon and the First Vision. The mission president did not answer the questions specifically, but called for a spiritual approach when hard historical facts were placed in question. When he defined truth as “whatever the prophet says, if he is not mistaken,” some members decided to leave the ward. Two former bishops and a former branch president were among those who left. All together thirty people left, most of them long active in responsible church positions such as branch and district presidencies, district and stake high councils. The wards, of course, were left in an uproar and are still trying to regain composure. The Delmonhorst Branch was subsequently dissolved. The remaining dwarf units continue to struggle.⁶⁶

Conclusion

Some people regard Mormonism’s past as irrelevant to its validity as a church today. However, Joseph Smith and his successors have always maintained that the LDS Church is both historically and doctrinally true. The 75,000 LDS missionaries being sent out this year are certainly proclaiming that message door to door. The issues discussed in this article are as relevant today as they were fifty years ago. As LDS President Gordon B. Hinckley so candidly acknowledged, either Joseph Smith invented Mormonism or it was from God. Both the Bible and history declare it to be a fraud. Our plea is for the troubled Mormon to go back to the New Testament and read it again. The message of Christ is beautifully simple—we are adopted into the family of God by grace, through faith in Christ, not the LDS Church. ♦

⁶⁶ Jorg Dittberner, “One Hundred Eighteen Years of Attitude: The History of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints in the Free and Hanseatic City of Bremen,” *Dialogue: A Journal of Mormon Thought*, vol. 36, no. 1, (Spring 2003), p. 68.

⁶⁵ *Salt Lake City Messenger*, (October 1981), no. 46; online at www.utlm.org/newsletters/no46.htm#Success

Three Meetings with an LDS General Authority, 2012–2013 by Grant H. Palmer

The following article was posted on www.journeyofloyaldissent.wordpress.com on April 6, 2013.

[Several months ago Grant Palmer, retired LDS Church educator and author of *Insider's View of Mormon Origins*,¹ personally shared some of this story with me. Sandra Tanner]

In mid-October 2012, a returned LDS Mission President contacted me to arrange a meeting. Several days later, he called again and said that a member of the First Quorum of the Seventy also wished to attend. He said the General Authority would attend on condition that I not name him or repeat any stories that would identify him. He explained that neither of them, including the GA's wife, believed the founding claims of the restoration were true. He clarified that they had read my book, *An Insider's View of Mormon Origins*, and had concluded that the LDS Church was not true; was not what it claimed to be. The GA often went to the MormonThink.com website for information and there discovered my book. The Mission President said he received my book from the GA.

We have at this writing met three times. We first met on Tuesday, October 23, 2012 and again February 14, 2013 at my house. On March 26, 2013 we convened at the GAs house. Upon entering my home for the first meeting the GA said, "We are here to learn." I recognized him. He has been a member of the First Quorum of the Seventy for a number of years. He has served in several high profile assignments during this period. The following are the more important statements made by the GA during our first three meetings. We now meet monthly.

He said that each new member of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles is given one million dollars to take care of any financial obligations they have. This money gift allows them to fully focus on the ministry. He said that the overriding consideration of who is chosen is whether they are "church broke," meaning, will they do whatever they are told. He said the senior six apostles make the agenda and do most of the talking. The junior six are told to observe, listen and learn and really only comment if they are asked. He said that it takes about two to three years before the new apostle discovers that the church is not true. He said it took Dieter F. Uchtdorf a little longer because he was an outsider. He said they privately talk among themselves and know the foundational claims of the restoration are not true, but continue on boldly "because the people need it," meaning the people need the church. When the Mission President voiced skepticism and named ___ as one who surely did believe, The GA said: "No, he doesn't." The one million dollar gift, plus their totally obedient attitude makes it easy for them to go along when they find out the church is not true. For these reasons and others,

he doesn't expect any apostle to ever expose the truth about the foundational claims.

When I asked the GA how he knew these things, he answered by saying that the Quorum of the Twelve today is more isolated from the Quorums of the Seventies now because there are several of them. When only one Quorum of the Seventy existed, there was more intimacy. During his one on one assignments with an apostle, conversations were more familiar. He said that none of the apostles ever said to him directly that they did not believe; but that it was his opinion based on "my interactions with them." Also, that none of the Twelve want to discuss "truth issues," meaning issues regarding the foundational claims of the church. He said that the apostle's lives are so completely and entirely enmeshed in every detail of their lives in the church, that many of them would probably die defending the church rather than admit the truth about Joseph Smith and the foundations of the church.

The GA stated that my disciplinary action (which would have occurred on the final Sunday of October 2010 had I not resigned), was mandated/ordered/approved by the First Presidency of the Church. I said that if the apostles know the church is not true and yet order a disciplinary hearing for my writing a book that is almost certainly true regarding the foundational claims of the church, then they are corrupt even evil. He replied, "That's right!"

The GA said the church is like a weakened dam. At first you don't see cracks on the face; nevertheless, things are happening behind the scenes. Eventually, small cracks appear, and then the dam will "explode." When it does, he said, the members are going to be "shocked" and will need scholars/historians like me to educate them regarding the Mormon past.

The Mission President and the GA both said they attend church every Sunday and feel like "a hypocrite and trapped." The GA said his ward treats him like a king and when he gives firesides and speaks to LDS congregations they have high expectations of him. He would like to do more in getting the truth out besides raising a few questions when speaking and gifting my book to others when feeling comfortable. Perhaps this is why he has reached out to me. The GA is a man of integrity and very loving. Upon leaving each time, he always gives me a big hug. ♦

¹ Grant Palmer, *Insider's View of Mormon Origins*. Available at utlm.org

Excerpts from Letters and Emails

May 2013: I have been reading your website for a long time and finally left the Mormon Church in December of this past year. . . . It took me a long time to realize all the problems and out-right lies of Mormonism. I was very upset at having been miss-led so completely.

It's hard to leave and I was still somewhat insecure about it at the time. However, I have joined a Christian Church which teaches nothing but the Bible, . . . The Minister has even read to us (and explained the native tongue meanings) from Hebrew and Greek Bibles so as to aid in our understating of some of the English Bible passages. . . . This is complete opposite of the shallow depth of knowledge I had seen in the local Stake Presidents and/or Bishops. . . . I have learned more in the past 7 months about the true and in-depth understanding of the Christian Bible than all of 40 years of surface knowledge handed out by the Mormon Church Melchizedek priesthood holders, Bishops, local Presidents, and stake Presidents. . . . Thank you so much for your work. I know you have brought many to Christianity.

May 2013: Your site and books have been an enormous help to me. I was needing a crash course in Mormonism to engage a Mormon friend who was going to spend a week with us in early May. She had given me a BoM earlier, but I had found it extremely difficult to read . . . My friend . . . arrived as scheduled . . . I had formed a handful of questions on basic BoM to ask her and as anything LDS is her favorite subject, getting the conversation going was easy. Is it real history? Translation or transliteration? Anachronisms: chariots, horses, steel etc. Archeological sites? Language, DNA. You get the picture. For each question she had a push button, no nonsense reply and prying about them further produced a strong push back, so I was looking for a different approach when I thought of Sam, Lehi's son.

When I had first read about Sam in the BoM I remember bursting out laughing. No Israelite would ever name their child "Sam", cutting off "el", God.

So I asked her about Sam. And we talked about Hannah, being barren, and why she named her son Samuel - Shema El. God hears. And recited the Jewish Shema - "hear o Yisrael". Then we talked about El. God. Beth El. House of God, etc. "El" would never knowingly be omitted from a name. So, knowing that no Israelite would ever name a child simply "Hear", explain to me how and why Lehi came up with "Sam"? She had not heard that question before, fully understood the logic and therefore the legitimacy of it, and had no answer. It was the first time in the few years I have known [my friend] that she did not have an answer for a BoM question. Stunning. For all her LDS brainwashing she is intellectually honest. One just has to breach the Mormon armor of an auto-answer to find it. When she left a few days later she was still puzzling over "Sam" and promised to get back with me. Inside I was doing handsprings.

The Holy Spirit found a small niche for His truth to rest in the mind of my friend, and I am praying for it to grow and produce a fatal crack in the Mormon lie that has her so bound.

May 2013: Looking back over that time between when I was exiting Mormonism and when God put and established me in Christ, there were a host of other influences that tried to reach out and grab me. I thank God that one counterbalancing influence was you, Sandra, and your books, and the personal time you gave me. I am ever grateful.

May 2013: I know that we are all sons and daughters of God. I have a current Temple recommend Being fast Sunday today I bore my Testimony to the truth fullness of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter day Saints and of the prophet Joseph Smith and our current prophet pres. Monson.

May 2013: I recently resigned my membership in the LDS Church. I was "born and raised" in the church, rendered lip service to professing a testimony, served on a foreign mission, served as well in a ward bishopric, and was even ordained a High Priest by Thomas Monson—all gratefully repudiated, I might add. . . . My renunciation and denunciation of Mormonism have NOT been difficult—not laden with remorse, guilt, or misgivings. I have never been happier since voluntarily throwing off the trappings of "the church." It was the appropriate decision when, after 76 years of church membership, I came to the full realization one fine day that the so-called Gospel as taught in my former church was a sham and a lie.

May 2013: After reading your latest newsletter/magazine, I handed it to a Mormon in my housing unit. At first he didn't want it, but took it in the end. Yesterday he asked me to pray for him as he is now struggling with his Mormon/LDS faith.

June 2013: In search of the truth and my heart hurts but I know that this pain is necessary. Thank you all . . . I'm Former Sunday School President, after 4 years I resigned for the right reasons . . . NOT a Mormon hater but have confirmed that the deceit from the LDS church is not: Christ-like, honest or helpful.

I recently had my Bishop ask me not to baptize my son; this was because I was honest enough to state a small fraction of my concerns in private. I simply focused on Brigham Young's Adam/God issue since I know it didn't hit at HIS core values. I was accused of not praying reading scripture enough. NOPE!! Take care, God Bless and more power to you!

July 2013: I do not believe you or your words at all. Go Away!

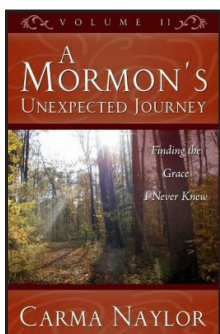
July 2013: My wife and I recently resigned from LDS church after 40 years of life-long service and TONS of money donated

It all started on February 10, 2013, when we were sitting in Gospel Doctrine class and I read D&C 49:16 about having one wife. For some reason the question pricked me . . . if God commanded Joseph in a modern day revelation that we should only have one wife, then why did we ever practice polygamy??

I had recently gotten an iPad with my scriptures on it so I decided to do a quick internet search and see how the church justified that. I've never gone outside the scriptures and basic LDS resources to read and study so I was blown away when I pulled up fairmormon.org. I had never heard of that site before, nor had I ever realized there were SO MANY problems the church was dealing with! Within a week of all-consuming research, I lost my testimony of the church. My wife immediately followed and we officially resigned a few months ago.

I'm a successful small business owner with a wife and three great kids. Born and raised in Utah and then moved [out of state] in 2003. We are eternally grateful for people like you who have shed light on the dreary world of Mormonism!! Your website and extensive information is incredible! Thank you, thank you, thank you!!

July 2013: hey i was wondering why you spend these countless hours trying to disprove the church when you could go on living your life. you guys have serious issues you are dealing with here.

| | |
|---|--|
|  | <p><i>A Mormon's Unexpected Journey: Finding the Grace I Never Knew Volume 2</i> By Carma Naylor</p> <p><i>Volume 2 continues Carma's compelling story!</i></p> <p>\$19.00</p> |
|---|--|

July 2013: First off, I want to say thank you so much for your web site. Thank you so much for putting the facts there. . . . I'm 29 years old, born and raised in the LDS Church and very active in it all those years for the most part. . . .

After my divorce I had a few bishops wanting me to go through the temple to get my endowments. I told them I took it very seriously and I just didn't feel like it was the right time to go through. . . . I went through the . . . Temple [in 2012] for my first time (I did baptisms for the dead when I was in young womens and in institute—lots of times.) . . . They told me to focus on the feeling and just enjoy it. But it was soooo different then I had thought. It was so confusing to me before I even got to the endowment session.

I thought the priesthood, the men, are the ones that have the priesthood so the washing and anointing having the female do it really confused me. I could see on the board the [new] name written and had been erased, when she gave me my secret name it was the same one and I tried not to let that bother me and put it in the back of my mind. It was so much different than I thought it would be. I thought it would be more personable and felt more closer to God but it was different and I left with a head ache. But I told everyone that I loved it and I felt good being in there and it was a good experience. But it really did confuse me and it was so not what I thought it was going to be and I was kind of disappointed!

20 days later at my work I met a guy and we started dating. little by little he would always talk about Joseph Smith, free masonry, the temple and etc. The things he told me did not feel right and I was like no that can't be true. I was never taught a lot of those things he was telling me. . . . and he even showed me some things in the church history volumes, so he always proved everything he told me.

First I tried to prove him wrong about polygamy and some things from the Bible since that was the only book he believed in. . . . He showed me the similarities to the book of the hebrews and the book of mormon, the stone and the hat, the magical practices and basically the whole translation process. Those hit me hard. (I mean the book of mormon is the cornerstone of the religion!) One day though he told me that he showed me everything he could and that he gave up on me with showing me stuff and get through to me. He told me boy the lds church really has its claws in you! He was right, I was 100 percent all in it and I was happy in it.

One day I prayed to Heavenly Father to guide me to the truth, that I wanted to know the truth no matter the price. That I want to return to him again and I love him and Jesus and if He wants me to stay in the church I will, if he wants me to leave I will, just let me know what is true. I thought I had the truth, but please guide me to it.

Boy did he answer that prayer so fast! I asked the guy I was dating one more time to show me things. So he showed me the information about the stone and the hat etc. I watched a movie on 'Jesus vs Joseph Smith' that some Christians put out I think. Everything clicked, it felt like that and everything came pouring out and it just all hit me! Joseph Smith was not what he claimed and the Church leaders are deceiving and lying to the lds people! Then I started doing research on my own, he gave me all the websites and places I needed so I could do deep research. Now all I see when I look at the temple is that it is masonic and not from God. . . .

I had always thought that since Joseph smith got a revelation from god about polygamy that he did practice it, but I don't think I was ever taught that, they focus on him and emma. So it wasn't that big of a deal to find out he did have more than one wife, and the 14 year olds he married was gross, but what bugged me even more was the polyandry. I did deep research and that guy helped me a lot.

But the only one who could touch my heart and actually get through to me was God. He answered my prayer and I have never felt closer to him. I came to find out that I can trust the Bible and on mother's day I started going to a non denominational Christian church. I love it! I am reading the new testament and I have never felt Jesus so close to me. I have never felt so much love for him and from him, comfort and peace! it is amazing! I love Jesus so much! The cross was enough! What my Savior did for me and everyone was enough! He did it all! It is so hard for me with there being no pre-existence and then trying to figure out what really is biblical and true vs what is man made by Joseph Smith and the LDS Church.

July 2013: I am a former LDS member and a Biblical Christian. Actually, I have not officially resigned from the LDS church . . . but my husband and I physically left the church about 15 years ago and have been members of a couple of solid Christian churches since then. There were many things that the Lord used in the beginning to show us there was a problem in the LDS teaching, by the way, and we did end up looking at some of the Tanners' material. We're grateful for your work and that you seek to represent the church accurately because we agree it does Christians and Mormons a great disservice to do otherwise.

July 2013: Thank you for the prompt processing of my order [digital PDF copy of *Mormonism—Shadow or Reality?*]. I've been examining your work for the last hour or so. I am nothing but impressed so far! . . .

I am especially grateful for the photo of Jerald and Sandra at the end of the book. It helps to buttress my representations to my still-LDS-believing family members that the book was NOT written by demons but by extremely intelligent, spiritual, compassionate, and hard-working human beings who care about truth.

July 2013: Dear sister in Christ, i just wanted you to know that i am so grateful for your service. Thank so much dear, dear sister.

About month ago i found out information about history of the mormon church. It was really hard time in my life because i was a faithful member of this church about 11 years, served my mission and now i know the truth. i am sorry for my poor english, but my poor english helped me to understand most of information. I still wondering about how this church is man-made and fake religion and has awful history. It's still hard for me . . . and i stopped attending their worship. And all my friends in Russia they are mormons . . . i feel so bad because they was deceived and many of them just ignoring information about history of the church. . . . i loosing my friends and my family . . . But now i know the real Christ. And it worth it. I feel his love for me, but i still feel lonely with my new reality. I reading the Bible every day and sometime it's hard to understand things because of the doctrine of mormonism in which i believed. . . . It is more harder for Russians to know the real situation of things, you know, because we have no translated books and have no church libraries where you can find information. . . . well, Sandra, because of your ministry now i know the truth and i was born again and i want to follow the Jesus till the end. I now preparing my paper for resignation from the church.

July 2013: This article [www.utlm.org] helped me a lot.. the way u have explained and have put jesus's saying before any other person.. I loved it.. I'm thinking of joining the lds church and when researched a little about lds and joseph smith I found out about his wives.. and this ruined everything.. but this article helped me see that no matter what people teach we can always chose whether to accept it or not.. God has given us free will.. thank u for reminding me. . . . actually recently my boyfriend became a member of the lds church and just went for serving a mission. The thing is I found out all this after so long I mean I've to wait till he comes back. For me to explain to him.

July 2013: I have a meeting w/ my Bishop coming up . . . I prepared in part for this meeting thru the books from UTM [www.utlm.org]. . . I resigned from my Sunday school president position in January. The genesis was that I saw the church manuals for what they are managed and at the "George Washington chopped down the cherry tree level." I started my own research and WOW! I was misled, lied to and have been rebuked for stating the truth.

July 2013: My story of finding Jesus! Those of you who have known me for a long time are probably wondering why I left the Mormon Church. I want to share my story with you . . . I was born and raised in the Mormon faith. It completely defined who I was. I met my husband just as he was coming home from serving a 2 year mission for the Mormon Church. We were married in the temple.

Those of you who knew me when I was Mormon knew I lived it. Down to every last detail the prophets laid out for me. No rated R movies, living the word of wisdom fully, no extra piercings, etc. . . I was attending the temple with my husband at least once a month or even more frequently. I had a calling in the Mormon church and was serving faithfully in my calling. I one hundred percent lived and believed in Mormonism, I was all in.

One day my husband sat me down to have a talk. He said he had been reading the Bible and he didn't feel the Mormon Church was the right way to follow Jesus. I was floored. What? How could this be? He proceeded to show me multiple places in the Bible that contradicted Mormon doctrine. He also began to show me that the history of the Mormon Church that I had been taught my whole life was not the whole truth. The history taught by the Mormon Church has many important details left out and many lies are told. (If you are interested in knowing these things I am more than happy to share them with you, also at Deseret Book you can buy a book called "Joseph Smith: Rough Stone Rolling" it is a book about the history of Joseph Smith written by a historian for the Mormon church.)

I was shocked by these things but I remained in a place of faith. I had believed my whole life that this was the only true church, so I was going to continue to cling to it. Over the next couple years our marriage struggled in a major way. My husband left the Mormon Church completely and told me he wouldn't be going back. I had family members (who are Mormon) telling me that my husband must be cheating on me and others telling me I should leave him so I could be with a "priesthood holder". I even had thoughts of ending the marriage, but since we had our sweet 2 year old _____ I couldn't bear the thought of splitting up his parents.

So I began praying to God to tell me what to do. I got a very sure answer that God did NOT want me to split up my family. So I stayed and slowly through reading and studying I began realizing the true character of Joseph Smith. For a man who claimed he "saw God", he did not act like one. I realized the things he did and the lies he told were not anything God would condone or allow for one of His prophets. That testified to me that he was not ever a true prophet of God. Once I came to that realization I was pretty sure that the Mormon Church wasn't true. So I took it one step further and asked God if the Mormon Church was true. I got a very sure and quick answer and it shocked even me. God was telling me that Mormonism was false.

During this time of questioning we were introduced to a non-denominational church. We began going occasionally. It was there that I was introduced to a new concept. It was that: Jesus died for us on the cross and there is nothing we can do on our own to go to heaven, all we can do is accept Jesus as our Lord and Savior and His sacrifice for us and we will be saved (Romans 10:9-10, Acts 4: 10-12). I was amazed that I felt the Holy Spirit so strong when they were saying these things. It was stronger than I had ever felt it in my life. One Sunday during the church service, it hit me. I realized I never knew this Jesus they were

talking about. Yes I was taught of a Jesus in the Mormon Church, but it wasn't this Jesus they were telling me about.

When I was Mormon I was told that in order to go to heaven (their "highest degree of Glory") I had to do things. I had to be baptized, and I had to make and keep covenants in the temple. I now know that Jesus meant it when he said "It is finished". He died and was raised from the dead and when we accept Him we are saved. To think that there is anything you can do to get to heaven is complete blasphemy (Isaiah 64:6). You cannot earn your spot in heaven (Ephesians 2: 8-10, Titus 3: 5-7). Jesus paid it all, period! Either you are going to accept and trust in God's sacrifice fully or you are going to trust in yourself. When we stand before God on the judgment day it will go one of two ways. Jesus will come forward for you and say "She/he is mine, I died for her/him" or you will be judged according to your own works. I can tell you right now your works will never be enough (Galatians 2:16). Accept God at His word (John 3:16) and stop relying on yourself.

It isn't about belonging to a specific church or a joining a specific religion. It's all about Jesus. I left the Mormon Church for a personal relationship with Jesus. I challenge anyone who is Mormon or in any other religion to take a good look at what you believe in. Do you trust in God? Or are you relying on your own works? It can't be both! If your Church is teaching you that there are any works you can do of yourself to get to Heaven, then it is false. Don't discount what Jesus did for you any longer. Accept Him into your heart and into your life and be saved.

August 2013: Have you received a witness from God that your efforts are "on track" with His will? Do what is right.

August 2013: I too have been raised in the LDS church. I believe that I am one of the few [in my extended family] who have recognized the deceit of the church. My direct GG grandfather knew JS personally and was there with the polygamy revelation. In fact JS married two of my [ancestors]. I believe that my family is the largest in the church. My nephew is currently on a mission and my heart is breaking.

August 2013: I love your ministry. I was going to convert to Mormonism but after doing research I said. . . . NO WAY!! Thank u for your ministry.

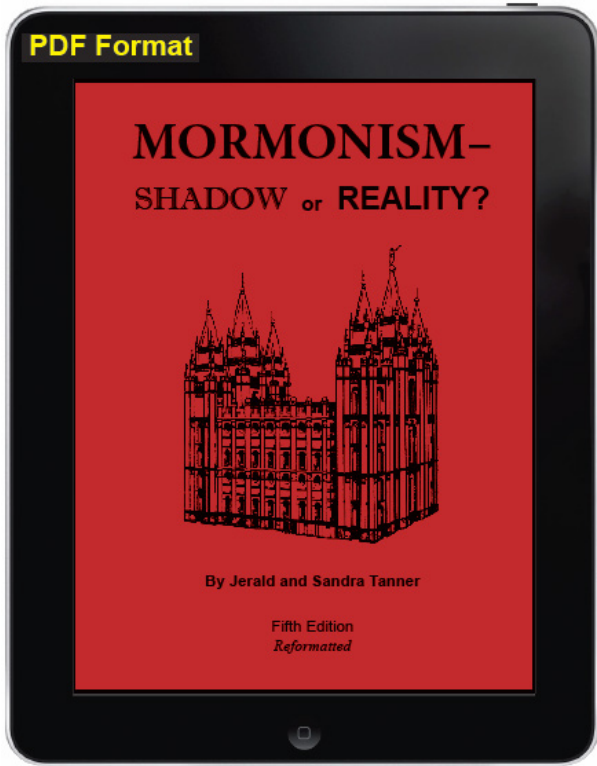
August 2013: It's really sad that you have a group that bashes the LDS church. You hate the church I get it. I really feel sorry for you and the others. You have no faith and never had a testimony. I know that God is my father and I am not adopted. That I am a daughter of God. That Jesus Christ died for my sins and yours. I know that my father in heaven loves me and answers my prayers. And so grateful that he told me this [LDS] is the true church. . . . I watch some of your videos I feel sad for you. I see a person trying so hard to see the bad in the LDS church.

August 2013: I am a Christ follower, I was born and raised in the Mormon church and my mother's maiden name is Young. My great-great-grand father is Brigham Young. I heard of you . . . and was surprised to hear that someone else is a Christ follower and being related to you know who. It is real awesome to know that I am not alone in the fight to bring home those who believe in Mormonism.

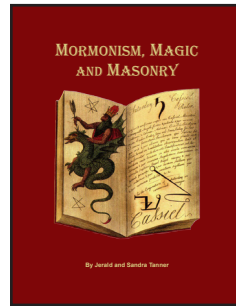
August 2013: So, what do you feel your mission is? Do what is right.

August 2013: My daughter and I . . . recently left Mormonism after 35 years of my life. I served a mission and was married in the Temple. We are a mixed faith household. God called myself and my 10 year old out but my husband is still in the Bishopric and my 12 year old son is 2nd counselor in the deacons presidency. Please pray. This is so hard. We are attending a Baptist Church and everything seems like a foreign language to me.

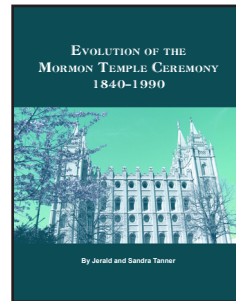
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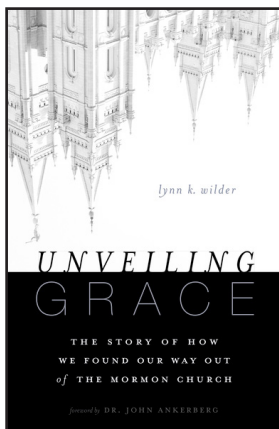


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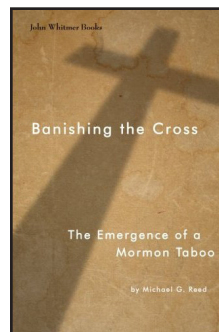
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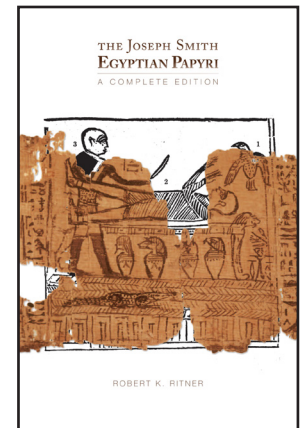


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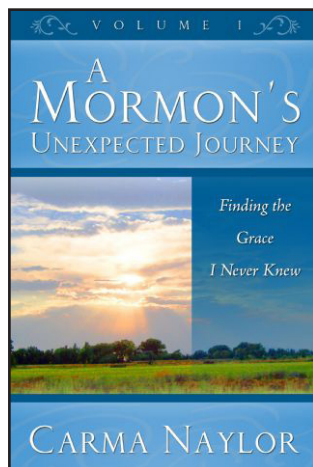
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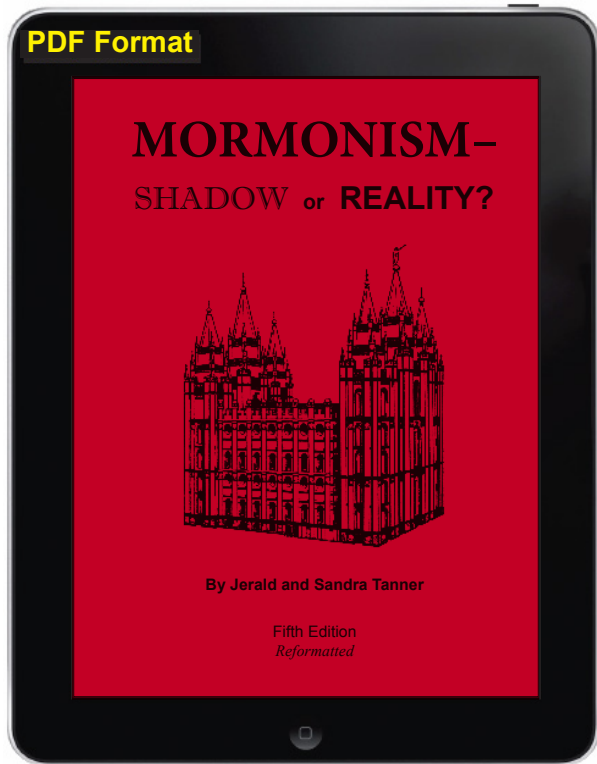


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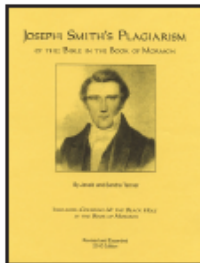
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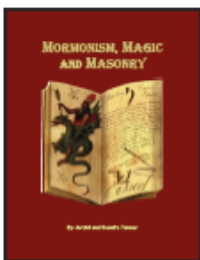


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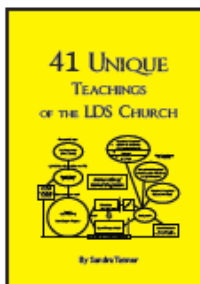
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| Why They Left: The True Story of Sandra Tanner | \$10.00 |
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| New Mormon Studies CD-ROM (2009 Edition) | \$90.00 |
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