

Joseph Smith's Traumatic Surgery

While our readers may be aware of traumatic events in the life of Joseph Smith, many do not know about the horrifying operation he experienced when he was approximately seven years old. Joseph was born in Vermont in 1805. But in 1811 his family moved to New Hampshire, where six of the Smith children came down with typhoid fever.

A couple of weeks after first getting sick, Joseph's leg had become so infected that there was talk of amputating it. The situation was very grave, and it was obvious that he could even lose his life.

Joseph Smith's mother, Lucy Mack Smith, recounted her memories of the event:

Joseph, our third son, having recovered from the typhus fever, after something like two weeks' sickness, one day screamed out while sitting in a chair, with a pain in his shoulder, and in a very short time, he appeared to be in such agony, that we feared the consequence would prove to be something very serious. We immediately sent for a doctor. When he arrived, and had examined the patient, he said that it was his opinion that this pain was occasioned by a sprain . . .

When two weeks of extreme suffering had elapsed, the attendant physician concluded to make closer examination; whereupon he found that a large fever sore had gathered between his breast and shoulder. He immediately lanced it, upon which it discharged fully a quart of matter.

As soon as the sore had discharged itself, the pain left it, and shot like lightning (using his own terms) down his side into the marrow of the bone of his leg, and soon became very severe. My poor boy, at this, was almost in despair, and he cried out "Oh, father! The pain is so severe, how can I bear it!"

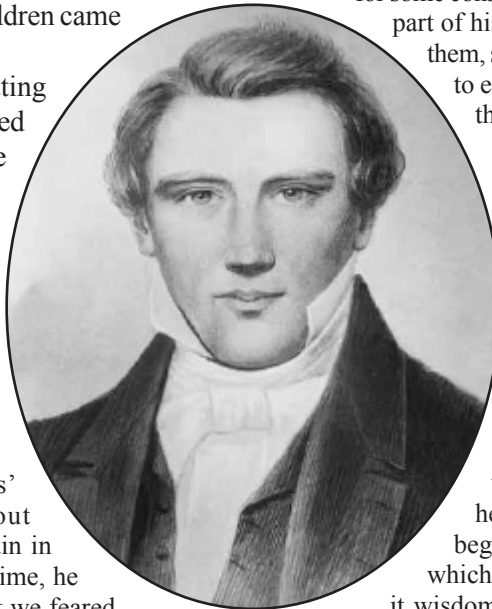
His leg soon began to swell, and he continued to suffer the greatest agony for the space of two weeks longer. During this period, I carried him much of the time in my arms, in order to mitigate his suffering as

much as possible; in consequence of which I was taken very ill myself . . .

Hyrum, who was rather remarkable for his tenderness and sympathy, now desired that he might take my place . . . Hyrum sat beside him, almost day and night, for some considerable length of time, holding the affected part of his leg in his hands, and pressing it between them, so that his afflicted brother might be enabled to endure the pain, which was so excruciating, that he was scarcely able to bear it.

At the end of three weeks, we thought it advisable to send again for the surgeon. When he came, he made an incision of eight inches, on the front side of the leg, between the knee and ankle. This relieved the pain in a great measure, and the patient was quite comfortable until the wound began to heal, when the pain became as violent as ever.

The surgeon was called again, and he this time enlarged the wound, cutting the leg even to the bone. It commenced healing the second time, and as soon as it began to heal, it also began to swell again, which swelling continued to rise till we deemed it wisdom to call a council of surgeons; and when they met in consultation, they decided that amputation was the only remedy.



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Soon after coming to this conclusion, they rode up to the door, and were invited into a room, apart from the one in which Joseph lay. They being seated, I addressed them thus: "Gentlemen, what can you do to save my boy's leg?" . . .

After consulting a short time with each other, they agreed to do as I have requested, then went to see my suffering son.

The principal surgeon, after a moment's conversation, ordered cords to be brought to bind Joseph fast to a bedstead; but to this Joseph objected. The doctor, however, insisted that he must be confined, upon which Joseph said very decidedly, "No, doctor, I will not be bound, for I can bear the operation much better if I have my liberty." "Then," said Dr. Stone, "will you have some brandy?" . . .

"No," exclaimed Joseph, "I will not touch one particle of liquor, neither will I be tied down; but I will tell you what I will do—I will have my father sit on the bed and hold me in his arms, and then I will do whatever is necessary in order to have the bone taken out." Looking at me, he said, "Mother I want you to leave the room, for I know you cannot bear to suffer so; father can stand it, but you have carried me so much, and watched over me so long, you are almost worn out." Then looking up into my face, his eyes swimming in tears, he continued, "Now, mother, promise me that you will not stay, will you? The Lord will help me, and I shall get through with it."

To this request I consented, and getting a number of folded sheets, and laying them under his leg, I retired, going several hundred yards from the house in order to be out of hearing.

The surgeons commenced operating by boring into the bone of his leg, first on one side of the bone where it was affected, then on the other side, after which they broke it off with a pair of forceps or pincers. They thus took away large pieces of the bone. When they broke off the first piece, Joseph screamed out so loudly, that I could not forbear running to him. On my entering the room, he cried out, "Oh, mother, go back, go back; I do not want you to come in—I will try to tough it out, if you will go away."

When the third piece was taken away, I burst into the room again—and oh, my God! what a spectacle for a mother's eye! The wound torn open, the blood still gushing from it, and the bed literally covered with blood. Joseph was as pail as a corpse, and large drops of sweat were rolling down his face, whilst upon every feature was depicted the utmost agony!

I was immediately forced from the room, and detained until the operation was completed; but when the act was accomplished, Joseph put upon a clean bed, the room cleared of every appearance of blood, and the instruments which were used in the operation removed, I was permitted again to enter.

Joseph immediately commenced getting better, and from this onward, continued to mend until he became strong and healthy. When he had so far recovered as to be able to travel, he went with his uncle, Jesse Smith, to Salem, for the benefit of his health, hoping the sea-breezes would be of service to him, and in this he was not disappointed. (*Biographical Sketches of Joseph Smith the Prophet and his Progenitors for Many Generations*, by Lucy Smith, mother of the Prophet, 1853, pages 62-65; Reprinted under the title *Joseph Smith's History by His Mother*.)

One is left to wonder how this traumatic surgery and the trip to his uncle's home in Salem affected young Smith?

Although Joseph Smith dictated his recollection of the operation for his *History of the Church*, he never included it in the published version. While we noticed this story in a microfilm of the manuscript for the History in the 1960s, his account was not available to the public until 1970. Mormon scholar Reed Durham finally published Smith's account in *Brigham Young University Studies*:

"When I was five years old or thereabouts I was attacked with the Typhus Fever, and at one time, during my sickness, my father dispaired of my life. The doctors broke the fever, after which it settled under my shoulder, and Dr. Parker called it a sprained shoulder and anointed it with bone ointment, and freely applied the hot shovel, when it proved to be a swelling under the arm which was opened, and discharged freely, after which the disease removed and descended into my left leg and ankle and terminated in a fever sore of the worst kind, and I endured the most acute suffering for a long time under the care of Drs. Smith, Stone and Perkins, of Hanover. At one time eleven Doctors came from Dartmouth Medical College, at Hanover, New Hampshire, for the purpose of amputation, but, young as I was, I utterly refused to give my assent to the operation, but consented to their trying an experiment by removing a large portion of the bone from my left leg, which they did, and fourteen additional pieces of bone afterwards worked out before my leg healed, during which time I was reduced so very low that my mother could carry me with ease." (*Brigham Young University Studies*, Summer 1970, page 481)

In our May 1996 newsletter we suggested the possibility that Joseph Smith's horrific operation could have caused severe mental problems.

Interestingly, in a book published in 1998 by the American Psychiatric Press, we find that William D. Morain, M.D. explored this very theory. He is the author of more than 100 scientific and literary publications.

In the foreword to Morain's book John C. Nemiah, M.D., Professor of Psychiatry, Dartmouth Medical School, wrote the following regarding Morain's work:

He has, in the first place, exhumed from contemporary documents an objective account of the details of an overwhelmingly painful surgical procedure endured by Joseph Smith at the age of seven, a traumatic event whose subsequent reverberations Dr. Morain traces in the repetitive patterns of behavior and fantasies of Smith's adult life. Furthermore, Dr. Morain goes beyond the pathogenic effect of the traumatic episode to demonstrate how the horrifying *real* events of the surgery combined with the development phase-specific *fantasies* of a seven-year-old boy to bring about a permanent pathological distortion of Joseph Smith's entire early psychological growth and development, with significant consequences for his subsequent adult psychological functioning.

In his book, *The Sword of Laban: Joseph Smith, Jr. and the Dissociated Mind*, Dr. Morain made this comment about his work with children who had been traumatized:

The worst of all for me has always been the suffering of burned children. It is impossible not to inflict repeated pain during the necessary dressing changes on their tender raw surfaces. Their emotional reactions are always heartbreaking to me, even after all my years in intensive care units. Despite the explanations and the diversions, the pain administered by an adult is always perceived as punishment. I know that by the time they leave the hospital, their emotional lives will be as indelibly scarred as their hands and faces. I am aware that their future behavior may be driven in new and unpredictable directions by the painful stresses of their treatment. Their lives may have been extended by the treatment, but in exchange of an emotional mortgage with lifetime payments because of what I had done. (*The Sword of Laban*, page xix)

If children being treated for burns are left with emotional scars, one wonders how the trauma of leg surgery without benefit of anesthesia affected Joseph Smith?

Although Joseph Smith stated that he "was five years old or thereabouts" at the time of his operation, scholars now believe this happened when he was seven. LeRoy S. Wirthlin M.D., observed that the Smith's would not have been living in Lebanon, New Hampshire, when Joseph was five. (*Brigham Young University Studies*, Spring 1981, pages 146-147)

Dr. Wirthlin gave some interesting information about surgery in Joseph Smith's time:

In 1813, in America, surgery was not a medical specialty. There were no surgeons as we know them today. Physicians operated out of necessity, but none claimed surgery as a specialty. Moreover, only a few who practiced medicine had ever attended medical school.

These were primitive days . . . there was not a single institution in New England in 1813 that might be called a hospital.

In addition to the problems of infection, the absence of anesthetics limited the number of operations. Before anesthesia was demonstrated in 1846, surgery was an ordeal for the patient and surgeon as well . . . In 1813, surgery was carried out under the most humble circumstances . . .

Joseph's surgery has been described as "brutal" and "gruesome," but when seen through the eyes of the surgeon, there was a great sophistication in the operation performed . . . With the proper operation, the bone drained, and the dead fragments removed, Joseph Smith's long ordeal with osteomyelitis rapidly approached an end. He regained strength and recovered. There was additional drainage of bone, for Joseph recalls fourteen pieces of bone worked their way to the surface before the wound closed. As nothing was mentioned about the healing of the wound, we assume it was straightforward. Joseph used crutches for three years following the surgery and was known to walk with a slight limp in later life. (*Brigham Young University Studies*, Spring 1981, pages 131-132, 152, 153)

While Dr. Wirthlin provided some excellent research concerning Joseph Smith's operation, Dr. Morain concentrated on the psychological impact the operation had on Joseph Smith's mind. Morain stated:

A cluster of three obscenely painful operations on the lower extremity of a 7-year old boy without anesthesia could hardly have been experienced other than as a horrible emotional trauma with a worst case of psychological overtones . . . I soon began to ask myself what adult behavior patterns might be expected in such an individual whose brutal childhood trauma held themes of dismemberment, punishment, and worse. Would there be allusions to this incident in his writings? In his religious rituals? What about polygamy? . . .

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The story that soon began to emerge from authoritative sources concerning the grandiose behavior of Joseph Smith, Jr. was more than a little disturbing. But, I asked myself, did it automatically follow that if this quixotic man were not divine, was he therefore a willful fraud, a vicious imposter, or a promiscuous lothario? Was there another way to interpret Joseph Smith's behavior that was both internally consistent and compatible with what is known from studies of human behavior? . . . But it was not until the "final" draft was completed some two or three years later that I was introduced to a far more important source than the Freudians, one that demanded that I rethink and rewrite major portions of the book. I refer to the sensitive writings of Dr. Lenore Terr, the child psychiatrist of San Francisco whose original contributions on the long-term effects of childhood trauma have brought the entire field to a new focus of understanding. Terr's work and that of Dr. Leonard Shengold and others demonstrated to me how the behavior of Joseph Smith, Jr. shared so many common features with that of others who have experienced similar humiliating and painful experiences as small children. Again, as Terr writes, "A whole life can be shaped by an old trauma, remembered or not."

And in the closing of one last circle, I unexpectedly encountered Dr. John Nemiah, my Harvard psychiatry professor of a quarter century past . . . he kindly helped to round out my understanding of the role of dissociation in psychopathology and how this seems to have played a role in Joseph Smith's behavior. (*The Sword of Laban*, pages xx-xxii)

Dr. Morain made the following observation concerning Joseph Smith:

It is my theses that Joseph Smith's childhood operations and the events surrounding his brother's death had a dramatic impact on Joseph's adult behavior, playing a major role in making him different from other men. In making this case, it will be necessary to explore what is known of the impact emotional traumas and surgical operations have on the fantasies of children and the sorts of lasting symptoms these fantasies can produce. Joseph Smith's actual operations will be viewed from this author's vantage point as a practicing surgeon . . . Joseph Smith's sexuality will be reexamined in light of his early trauma, as will those rituals and metaphors that punctuated his life. The focus throughout will be on understanding his behavior in the light of contemporary understanding of children's and adolescents' reactions to events of horror.

The case I present is not predicated on the discovery (with one minor exception) of new documents or other archival information. It does not require rewriting the historical record, but merely looking at it from fresh perspective . . . This perspective, I will state at the outset, has nothing to do with miracles, faith, or angels. But the question cannot be avoided concerning the extent to which some of the adult symptoms arising out of his personal

horrors may now be recognized as permanent effigies in the scripture and ritual of the church he founded.

During the course of my studies, I have developed great respect for the religious creativity of Joseph Smith, Jr. His prolific contributions have been expressed in some of the most vivid imagery in the language. He was deeply preoccupied with matters of guilt, bereavement, punishment, shame, redemption, and his relationship with superiors. (*The Sword of Laban*, page xxiv)

William Morain was impressed with Joseph Smith's ability to draw followers to his religious beliefs:

Joseph Smith, Jr. was no ordinary frontier preacher. He had so inspired his thousands of followers that they would deed all of their possessions to his care, travel across the ocean to tell his story, and suffer unspeakable hardship to stay by his side. He had a direct and simple style that was not lost in the most soaring metaphor of his oratory . . . And he carried an unparalleled measure of self-assuredness that would stand as a limitless fountain of strength to his followers and most maddening source of resentment to his enemies.

But it was neither his manner nor the allegiance of his followers that inspired vicious assaults on his being. He had claimed to have written a second Bible. He had announced himself to be a prophet—God's voice on earth. He had installed himself as lieutenant-general and commander of his own army. He would run for president of the United States against Martin Van Buren. He would proclaim himself King of the Kingdom of God. And he had brazenly violated the most basic sexual taboos of the society in which he lived. His grandiose behavior appeared to his detractors to threaten the very social fabric of American life. There seemed to be no explanation for his behavior other than that of an imposturous charlatan or a vainglorious madman—unless he was really who he and his followers said he was.

It is entirely possible that Joseph Smith, Jr. was a charlatan. It is possible that he was who he said he was. It is possible he was both. But there may be one more possibility: that he was a dynamic, creative, and charismatic leader who was driven by powerful inner forces that neither he nor those around him could understand or control. (*The Sword of Laban*, pages 1-2)

On page 12 of his book Dr. Morain wrote:

The pivotal event in Joseph's life that seems, at least in substantial part, to have profoundly altered his personality occurred shortly after his seventh birthday. At that time he underwent a cluster of surgical operations without anesthesia and was sent away from home to recuperate. The procedures themselves were expertly performed and clinically successful. But the brutal consequences for Joseph's emerging personality appear to have resulted not only from the operations themselves but also from the lamentable fact that the circumstances of those operations were similar to the age-appropriate oedipal fantasies already lurking in the

child's mind. When reality met fantasy in Joseph's bedroom, its result would be cataclysmic for his personality.

This tragic clash—occurring at age seven with Joseph's cluster of operations and subsequent separation from his family—would be the progenitor not only of a body of literary output but also of a unique cosmology. Why a surgical event should have had such a soul-wrenching impact—a catastrophic emotional trauma—is the subject of a sizeable body of psychoanalytic literature that must be incorporated into the story. (*The Sword of Laban*, page 12)

The psychological impact of this surgery is also explored in the book *Inside the Mind of Joseph Smith: Psychobiography and the Book of Mormon*, by Dr. Robert Anderson. Dr. Morain wrote the following in a book review of Dr. Anderson's book:

Rather than attempting a birth-to-death chronology, Anderson has chosen to limit his inquiry to a review of Smith's formative years and The Book of Mormon itself. It is Anderson's thesis that the Book of Mormon is a literal autobiography, rapidly dictated in the "spontaneous free association" . . . Anderson's unique contribution has been to demonstrate how the plot-line reflects the chronology of Smith's own life story four times over. In particular, Anderson identifies the various named characters in the Book of Mormon as alter egos of Smith, specific family members, doctors, ministers, judges, and miscellaneous adversaries. . . .

Anderson sees Smith's personality structure arising out of his dysfunctional family unit. His mother appears to have suffered episodic depression, and his weak, alcoholic father's obsession with magic kept him from productive support of his family. The added deprivation of rootless poverty in the important early childhood years made young Smith woefully vulnerable to the psychological devastation of his horrible surgical experience at age seven. . . .

My own reading of Anderson's book encountered only a few minor points of disagreement . . . I have no quarrel with his principal diagnosis . . . One cannot study the life of Joseph Smith without observing the primacy of narcissism in all its grandiosity. (*The John Whitmer Historical Association Journal*, Book Reviews, vol. 20, 2000, pages 155-156)

Both of these books are available from Utah Lighthouse Ministry.

The Sword of Laban: Joseph Smith Jr. and the Dissociated Mind, by Dr. William D. Morain, \$34.00 plus shipping.

Inside the Mind of Joseph Smith: Psychobiography and the Book of Mormon, by Dr. Robert D. Anderson, \$18.00, plus shipping.

Why Not Accept the Book of Mormon?

The *Salt Lake Tribune* reported on President Gordon B. Hinckley's talk at the October 2002 LDS Conference:

He [President Hinckley] also wondered why other Christians do not accept the Book of Mormon, which the church holds to be of an ancient record of New World inhabitants who were visited by Jesus Christ.

"I would think they would be looking for anything and everything that would establish without question the reality and the divinity of the savior of the world," Hinckley said. (*Salt Lake Tribune*, October 7, 2002, p. A6)

President Hinckley seems to have overlooked the basic problem. If the Book of Mormon is not a genuine historical document, it does not provide any additional proof or witness to the reality of Jesus. The world is still waiting for the LDS Church to present one specific Nephite or Lamanite artifact, ancient manuscript or site. The church does not even print a map designating Book of Mormon lands. So far there is every indication that the book is a work of fiction.

For further research on the Book of Mormon we suggest:

American Apocrypha: Essays on the Book of Mormon, edited by Dan Vogel and Brent Metcalfe, Signature Books, \$20.00.

The Creation of the Book of Mormon, by LaMar Petersen, Freethinker Press, \$14.00.

Joseph Smith and the Origins of the Book of Mormon, by David Persuitte, McFarland & Co., \$27.00.

The Golden Bible: or, The Book of Mormon, Is it From God? by Rev. Lamb. Reprint of 1887 book, good critique of internal story of Book of Mormon, \$8.00.

New Approaches to the Book of Mormon, edited by Brent Metcalfe, Signature Books, \$24.00.

Studies of the Book of Mormon, by B. H. Roberts, Signature Books, \$13.50.

Use of the Bible in the Book of Mormon and Early Nineteenth Century Events Reflected in the Book of Mormon, by Michael Marquardt, Utah Lighthouse, \$3.00.

Use of the Old Testament in the Book of Mormon, by Wesley P. Walters, Utah Lighthouse, \$8.00.

Quote from October 2002 LDS Conference—

"Often what passes for faith in this world is little more than gullibility."

Apostle Joseph B. Wirthlin
Salt Lake Tribune, October 7, 2002, page A6

First Vision or Fraud?

Speaking at the LDS Conference in October, 2002, President Gordon B. Hinckley declared that either Joseph Smith's vision in 1820 was authentic or Mormonism is a fraud. The *Salt Lake Tribune* reported:

LDS faithful believe it all began when 14-year-old Joseph Smith, the church's founder, had a vision of God and Jesus Christ in a grove of trees in 1820.

"Our whole strength rests on the validity of that vision," Hinckley declared. "It either occurred or it did not occur. If it did not, then this work is a fraud. If it did, then it is the most wonderful and important work under the heavens." (*Salt Lake Tribune*, Oct. 7, 2002, pages A1 & A6)

In 1998 President Hinckley stated that Smith's teaching on the nature of God the Father and Jesus differs from standard Christianity. He also maintained that Smith's 1820 vision gave him a knowledge of God's nature that surpassed that of any minister. Since ministers derive their understanding of God from the Bible, this would demonstrate that Smith's doctrine of God went beyond that source. The *Deseret News* reported:

In bearing testimony of Jesus Christ, President Hinckley spoke of those outside the Church who say Latter-day Saints "do not believe in the traditional Christ. No, I don't. The traditional Christ of whom they speak is not the Christ of whom I speak. For the Christ of whom I speak has been revealed in this the Dispensation of the Fulness of Times. He, together with His Father, appeared to the boy Joseph Smith in the year 1820, and when Joseph left the grove that day, he knew more of the nature of God than all the learned ministers of the gospel of the ages." (*Deseret News, Church News*, June 20, 1998, page 7)

Contrary to President Hinckley's affirmation, there are multiple reasons to question Joseph Smith's first vision account.

1. Smith claimed that from 1820 onward he was persecuted for telling the vision. Yet there is no contemporary evidence that he either told the vision to anyone or even attempted to write it down until 1832 (see *Mormonism and the Nature of God*, pages 92-3).
2. When he did write his 1832 account he only mentioned Jesus appearing. The account never stated that God the Father was present (see *An American Prophet's Record*, page 5).
3. If he had claimed a vision of Jesus it would not have been that different from many Christians of the day who claimed similar experiences (see *Inventing Mormonism*, page 52).
4. In 1834 the LDS Church magazine printed an account of the beginnings of Mormonism yet it failed to mention Smith's 1820 vision in the grove. Instead, it related that Smith's first vision happened in 1823 when the angel appeared in his bedroom to tell him of the Book of Mormon plates (see *Messenger and Advocate*, vol. 1, no. 3, pages 42 and 78).
5. In 1835 he related the vision in the grove to some visitors but he only mentioned angels appearing, not Jesus and God the Father (see *An American Prophet's Record*, pages 51, 59).
6. Early newspaper articles criticizing Joseph Smith never raised the issue of a vision in 1820 or that he was teaching that God the Father and Jesus are separate Gods (see *Sunstone Magazine*, July/Aug. 1980, page 27).
7. Smith's official account of his vision mentions he went into the grove to pray due to an 1820 revival in his neighborhood. However, there is no record of such a revival that year (*Inventing Mormonism*, chapter 2).
8. It can be demonstrated that Smith's doctrine of God the Father and Jesus having separate bodies developed years after the founding of Mormonism, not because of an 1820 vision (see *Mormonism and the Nature of God*, chapters 2 and 3).
9. The sermons of early LDS leaders show that they thought the first vision was of angels, not God and Jesus. Also, they did not use the first vision to establish their view of God the Father and Jesus as separate entities (see *Journal of Discourses*, vol. 6, pages 29, 335; vol. 2, pages 171, 196-197; vol. 10, page 127; vol. 12, pages 333-334).
10. Smith's concept of God the Father having once been a mortal, having a resurrected body, and achieving godhood contradicts the Bible (see Isaiah 43:10-11; Isaiah 44:6, 8, 24; Jeremiah 23:23-24).

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These are just a few of the many problems with Smith's claims. If anything happened to young Smith in the grove, it could not have been the experience he later described. For more information on the problems with the first vision, see the following books:

Mormonism and the Nature of God: A Theological Evolution, 1830-1915, by Kurt Widmer. \$35.00

Inventing Mormonism: Tradition and the Historical Record, by H. Michael Marquardt and Wesley P. Walters. \$18.00

New Light on Mormon Origins from the Palmyra NY Revival, by Wesley P. Walters. \$3.00

Early Mormon Documents vol. 1-4, edited by Dan Vogel. Price varies, see book list.

Chapters on the first vision can also be found in:

Mormonism—Shadow or Reality? by Tanners. \$18.00

Major Problems of Mormonism, by Tanners. \$8.00

The Changing World of Mormonism, by Tanners. (Only available online at www.utlm.org)

For a set of photos of various early references on the first vision, order *First Vision Photos* for \$6.00 plus shipping.

Revelation by Survey?

Every year the LDS faithful give a sustaining vote to their president, acknowledging his divine appointment as God's prophet, seer and revelator. The concept of direct communication from God goes back to the very beginning of Mormonism when Joseph Smith claimed to literally converse with God and Jesus. As one looks through their Doctrine and Covenants he will encounter various revelations given to Joseph Smith which start with the phrase, "Verily, thus saith the Lord" (i.e., Sec. 38; Sec. 52; Sec. 95; Sec. 100). However, since Smith's death in 1844, there have only been four additions to the LDS *Doctrine and Covenants*, none of which opens with the phrase "thus saith the Lord." The last section added to the compilation was in 1978.

Interestingly, the 1890 section ending plural marriage and the 1978 section ending priesthood restriction on Blacks, give instruction on ending embarrassing practices, not to establish new doctrine. These sections claim to be the result of revelation but the specific wording of the

divine communications are not published. Since both of these changes came after the church had received years of severe criticism from the outside, one is left to wonder if the changes were made due to pressure more than hearing the voice of God. Oddly, section 132, which instructed Smith on the practice of polygamy, is still retained in their scriptures. While there never was a revelation in the *Doctrine and Covenants* stating Blacks could not be ordained to the priesthood, there were statements by President Brigham Young declaring that descendants of Cain, interpreted as Blacks, would not get the priesthood until after the resurrection:

The Lord put a mark on him [Cain] . . . When all the other children of Adam have had the privilege of receiving the Priesthood, and of coming into the kingdom of God . . . and have received their resurrection . . . then it will be time enough to remove the curse from Cain and his posterity. (*Journal of Discourses*, vol. 2, page 143)

If the ban on priesthood was not due to revelation, but simply one of practice, then why did it take a revelation to end the practice?

All of this raises the additional question as to how revelation is currently received in the LDS Church? In a 1996 interview LDS President Gordon B. Hinckley explained the current process of divine direction:

"Revelation no longer comes by vision," Mr. Hinckley said, "but in the 'still, small voice,' like that heard by Elijah."

"We wrestle with a problem, we discuss it, we think about it, we pray about it," he said. . . . "And the answer comes in a remarkable and wonderful way." (*Washington Times*, Dec. 3, 1996, page A8)

This revelatory process seems to also include surveys of the membership. In 1988 a church survey was mailed to 3,400 members in the United States and Canada. Many of the questions dealt with the person's feelings and reactions to temple work. One of the questions wanted to know if the person "was confused by what happened" in the temple. Also, did he/she find the experience "unpleasant" or did she feel the rites were "too hurried." The survey also wanted to know if the person found "it hard to go to the temple" or if the person felt "guilty about not doing enough." One question tried to determine if the person felt "the church makes unreasonable demands" of its members. The results were not released, but in 1990 the LDS Church made major revisions to the temple ceremony, making it more palatable to the members.

In 1990 the church did another survey, evidently by telephone. Among other things, it wanted to know what type of marriage the person had (temple or civil), how active the person was in the ward and his level of tithing.

In 2001 the church sent out another survey to the female members. The *Salt Lake Tribune*, October 5, 2002, put the entire 30-page survey on its website, www.sltrib.com. It dealt with “everything from church attendance to belief in divine intervention.” The article further stated:

It asks if respondents felt depressed, lonely or sad in the past week and if they feel comfortable at Relief Society. How has their spiritual and prayer life progressed in the past five years, and why do they want to go to the celestial kingdom (Mormon heaven)—to be “with their family eternally, be in the presence of Heavenly Father, to experience eternal joy, achieve godhood, be free from sickness and pain, bear spirit children or create worlds?”

The article also reported:

One question that the survey skirts, however, is whether Mormon women want to be ordained to the all-male priesthood. It asks them if church leaders “understand the challenges of Latter-day Saint women today” or if women should be included more in “making decisions about church programs and policies at all levels.”

The survey was done “to provide church leaders with information about the needs and concerns of Latter-day Saint women,” says a letter . . . signed by Elder Ben Banks, . . .

“Along with frequent personal interaction with Latter-day Saints worldwide, senior church leaders occasionally use surveys as a means of listening to and learning from an increasingly diverse membership,” said LDS spokesman Dale Bills. “As with most large organizations, the results of such internal studies remain confidential.” . . . (*Salt Lake Tribune*, October 5, 2002, page C1)

Those taking the survey were assured “that individual responses would be kept confidential.” However, one female physician, Dr. Janet Howard, expressed her concerns:

“My questionnaire had a number and bar code on it.” Howard said. It may have been useful as a tracking system, but leaves her nervous about “where information is going.” . . . She is also troubled by the church’s unwillingness to publish the results. . . .

“Why do they need such a detailed questionnaire about how women are feeling when they are supposed to be receiving divine revelation?” she asked. (*Salt Lake Tribune*, October 5, 2002, page C3)

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Terminology Differences Between LDS and the Bible

By Sandra Tanner - Utah Lighthouse Ministry - www.utlm.org

GODHEAD

LDS: Father & Son are resurrected men with physical bodies. Holy Ghost is a separate man with a spiritual body. Three totally separate Gods. God is married. Other Gods for other worlds. (*D&C* 130:22; *Teachings*, pp. 345-346, pp. 370-373; *Doctrines of Salvation*, v.1, pp. 10-12)

BIBLE: God is not a man. (Num. 23:19) He has always been God. (Psa. 90:2; Mal. 3:6; Hab. 1:12; Rom. 1:22-25) Only one God. (Isa. 43:10-11; 44:6; 45:21-22) Father is Spirit. (John 4:24; 1 Tim. 1:17)

JESUS CHRIST

LDS: Literally our elder brother, born to Heavenly Parents in the premortal life. Jesus, Lucifer and humans are all the same species and are brothers and sisters. (*Gospel Principles*, pp. 11, 17, 18)

BIBLE: Fully God, not a subordinate deity. Eternal. (Isa. 9:6; John 8:58; 1 Tim. 3:16; Heb. 13:8; John 1:1-4, 14; Col. 1:16-17)

PREMORTAL LIFE

LDS: Teach that everyone existed in heaven before born on earth. We have existed eternally. (*D&C* 93:29; *PGP*: Bk of Abr 3:21-22; *Teachings*, pp. 352-354)

BIBLE: Only Christ existed before mortality, not man. (John 8:58; Col. 1:17) Our existence started on earth. (Zec. 12:1; 1 Cor. 15:46)

THE FALL

LDS: Fall was a blessing. It brought mortality, ability to have children and physical death. Adam was given conflicting commandments and was supposed to fall. (*Doctrines of Salvation*, vol. 1, pp. 111-116; *Gospel Principles*, pp. 31-33; 2 Nephi 2:25; *Mormon Doctrine*, pp. 268-269)

BIBLE: God intended obedience. (Gen. 1:28) God tempts no one. (James 1:13-14). Man is sinful. (Rom. 5:12; 8:5-8; 1 Cor. 2:14)

VIRGIN BIRTH

LDS: Believe God, as a resurrected physical man, is literal Father of Jesus—same manner in which men are conceived on earth. Believe Matt. 1:18 is in error. (*Mormon Doctrine*, pp. 546-547, 742)

BIBLE: Mary was “with child of the Holy Ghost.” (Matt. 1:18; Luke 1:30-35)

SIN

LDS: Specific acts, not man’s basic nature. Must know act is wrong to be a sin. (*Mormon Doctrine*, pp. 550, 735-736)

BIBLE: We are in spiritual rebellion until conversion. (Eph. 2:3; Rom. 5:6) We do not just commit sins; we are basically sinful. (Matt. 1:21; Jer. 17:9; Luke 5:32)

FORGIVENESS

LDS: Granted at end of process of repentance and reformed behavior (*Mormon Doctrine*, p. 292-298; *Gospel Principles*, pp. 75-77, 123; *Doctrines of Salvation*, vol. 1, pp. 133-134)

BIBLE: Complete forgiveness granted the moment we turn to Christ. (Mark 2:5; Col. 2:13-14; Eph. 1:6-7)

SALVATION BY GRACE

LDS: Believe Christ’s death brought release from grave and universal resurrection. Salvation by grace is universal resurrection. Beyond this, man must earn his place in heaven. Saved by grace after all we can do. (Book of Mormon, 2 Nephi 25:23; *Mormon Doctrine* pp. 669-671)

BIBLE: Salvation is not limited to universal resurrection but gift of God to those who believe. (Rom. 1:16; Heb. 9:28; Eph. 2:8-9)

REDEEMED

LDS: From mortal death only. Not same as Eternal Life. (*Doctrines of Salvation*, vol. 2, pp. 10-15)

BIBLE: Redeemed from more than mortal death; redeemed from spiritual death & given Eternal Life. (Rom. 6:23; Eph. 2:1; Gal. 4:4-5)

GOSPEL

LDS: Doctrines and commandments of the LDS Church. True gospel restored by Joseph Smith. (*Mormon Doctrine*, pp. 331, 334; *Doctrines of Salvation*, vol. 1, pp. 156-159)

BIBLE: Good news of Christ’s death and resurrection as atonement for our sins. (1 Cor. 15:1-4; Gal. 1:6-8)

BORN AGAIN

LDS: Baptism into the LDS Church. (*Mormon Doctrine*, p. 101)

BIBLE: We are spiritually dead until our spiritual birth. (1 Pet. 1:23; 2 Cor. 5:17; John 3:7, 14, 15)

TRUE CHURCH

LDS: Only the Mormon Church. The true church was taken from the earth until Joseph Smith restored it. (*D&C* 1:30; 115:3, 4; *Mormon Doctrine*, pp. 133, 136)

BIBLE: Not an organization; as born-again Christians we are part of God’s Church. (1 Cor. 12:12-14; Matt. 16:18; 18:19-20)

AUTHORITY - PRIESTHOOD

LDS: Believe only LDS have authority to baptize, ordain, etc. Have two-part system of priesthood—Melchizedek and Aaronic. (*Doctrines of Salvation*, vol. 3, pp. 80-81; *D&C* 107:1-21)

BIBLE: Christ brought end to Aaronic priesthood and is the only High Priest after the manner of Melchizedek. (Heb. 5:9-10; 7:11-17; 7:24-27; 2 Tim. 2:2)

BAPTISM

LDS: Must be performed by LDS priesthood. (*Mormon Doctrine*, pp. 69-72)

BIBLE: Emphasis is on Believer—not priesthood authority. (Matt. 28:19; Acts 2:37-41; 16:30-34)

SONS OF GOD

LDS: We were all born in heaven, prior to earth, as literal spirit children of God and his wife. (*Mormon Doctrine*, pp. 589-590)

BIBLE: Spiritually adopted at conversion. (John 1:12; Gal. 3:26)

ETERNAL LIFE

LDS: Exaltation in Celestial Kingdom; godhood and ability to bear children in heaven. Must have a temple recommend and be sealed in Mormon temple. (*D&C* 131:1-4; 132:19-25, 30, 55)

BIBLE: Not limited to certain ones in the top part of heaven. No mention of parenthood or temple marriage but is given to all true believers. (1 John 5:12-13; Luke 20:35-36)

IMMORTALITY

LDS: Universal gift. The ability to go to heaven and live forever but not same as Eternal Life. Lower level of heaven and unable to bear children. (*D&C* 14:7; *Mormon Doctrine*, pp. 237, 376-377, 670)

BIBLE: Makes no distinction between immortality and eternal life. No second class citizens in heaven. (2 Tim. 1:10; John 3:15-16)

HEAVEN

LDS: Divided into three kingdoms—Celestial, Terrestrial and Telesstial. A place for almost everyone. (*D&C* 88:16-20; Misuse of 1 Cor. 15:40-41)

BIBLE: Only mentions two conditions—everlasting punishment or eternal life. (Matt. 25:31-46; 2 Thess. 1:7-10)

HELL

LDS: Hell as an institution is eternal—inmates come and go as in jail, but do not spend eternity there. Temporary. After debt is paid they will go to the Telesstial Kingdom. (*Mormon Doctrine*, pp. 349-351)

BIBLE: No mention of people getting out of Hell. (Rev. 21:8; Matt. 13:24-43, 47-50; Luke 16:26)

KINGDOM OF GOD

LDS: Means Celestial Kingdom. Only those in the Celestial Kingdom are in God’s presence. Those in the Terrestrial or Telesstial Kingdoms are not in the presence of the Father. (*D&C* 76:50-88; 131:1-4; 132:16-17)

BIBLE: All redeemed will be in God’s presence. (Rev. 21:1-3) All believers are part of Kingdom. (Matt. 13:41-43)

LDS References:

Book of Mormon, *Doctrine and Covenants*, *Pearl of Great Price*
Mormon Doctrine by Bruce R. McConkie, 1979
Doctrines of Salvation by Joseph Fielding Smith
Teachings of the Prophet Joseph Smith by Joseph Fielding Smith
Gospel Principles, published by LDS Church, 1995

Extracts from Letters and Emails

(Spelling and grammar not corrected)

April 2002. Subject: Thank You for being there! I would just like to thank you for having this web site. My wife is in transition from Mormonism. We have found this Web Site very informative and very supportive. After 45 years of "being brainwashed" (her words not mine,) she all of a sudden decided that she could no longer believe in the Mormon Church. She has been away from the church for two years now and is still doing research. Thanks Again!!

April 2002. I am a mormon and when I read your Question and Answer about Mormon I am so feel sorry about your comments. I don't want to waste my time finding the truth because the truths will reveal itself. . . . you think you better than us. You attack mormon, so what is the good that you have. I don't believe in you a bit about attack the Mormon. I laugh when I read your theory. Please read more and pray about what you teach if it will really close to the truth. Have a nice research and by the way please go to church on SUNDAY.

April 2002. I find it ironic and somewhat hypocritical that active Mormons will criticize your site by saying such things as "Why do you feel it necessary to tear down another's faith." I would pose the same question back at them. After all, don't they do the same by stating that all other churches are an abomination and have no authority? Isn't the first lesson or teaching or whatever they call it designed to "tear down" or invalidate one's faith in order to replace it with the view of Mormonism?

April 2002. The Mormon god is very cruel to nonmember parents. They are not allowed to see their sons and daughters married [when the ceremony occurs in the temple]. My father has decided not to attend his granddaughter's wedding [where he would have to wait in a side room]. He feels that if he is not worthy to see the wedding he need not be there at all. Children are deprived of watching their sisters and brothers weddings. Many mormon children have never attended a wedding in their lives. The mormon god is one cold blooded deity. It is a far cry from Jesus making wine at the wedding he attended. I wonder if the missionaries pass this little tidbit of information out . . .

April 2002. You guys are doing awesome work for Jesus! Now I have the best source ever for responding to the confusing and frustrating arguments I hear from Mormons. Thank you!

April 2002. ok i really dont get you, you guys say you are so good. i never herd the lds church saying crap about another church. why do you do this to them, they are good people just look at them. they are the most healthy, they are smart and everything. a normal person isnt look at the prophet the is 91 years old and he doesnt even act like it, to me that is something amaizing. plus doesnt christ say in the bible to that contention is of the devil and what are you doing how can you say you are right if you are cousing contintion. it doesnt make sence. i am a fall away from the church, i know for a fact that it is true but it is too hard for me to do the commandments of God. saten wants us to fall away to temptation

April 2002. . . . Thank you for all your hard work and dedication to the truth. It has helped me stay away from the church and has proved invaluable to me in my efforts to enlighten my girlfriend to the true LDS church.

April 2002. I have read through mateiral on your website, and I have a strong testimony of the the LDS church. Everything that I have read is either misinterpreted, false, and if i'm not sure, than it is too crazy of an idea to be true, so I ask you to please stop assuming things about my religion, and stop misinterpreting and criticizing it. It is really pathetic to research everything you can, find little details which someone who hated the church probably made up in the first place, and criticize it with stupid stories and misinterpretations. Please stop worrying about the LDS church, and start doing something useful with your time. If you don't believe in the church, than concentrate on yours, you can't feel Gods love if all you do is have contention with people who follow him. I know it is good to research, but please people, you go too far.

April 2002. I find it ironic that a mormon would criticize your site. By their own scriptures "all Christian sects are corrupt". By their definition they are ashamed of Joseph Smith, Brigham Young, and several of the early leaders. Obviously these men were "unchristian" by their own given definition of the term.

And lets not forget Jesus Christ. How "unchristian" can one get, after all he said Woe to You Scribes and Pharisees, Hypocrites . . .

Interesting isn't it they condemn the one they profess to have their Church Named after. Maybe they should remember the Book of Jude that we are to contend for the faith. Oh sorry I forgot they don't believe the Bible.

April 2002. . . . First off, We believe that we have our own free agency to exercise and choose between good and evil. What side do you think you and your website are on the Good Or Evil in God's eyes? . . . Although we make mistakes, people who are faithful "don't" i repeat dont do drugs, drink alcohol, coffe, tea, caffine in general, masterbate, have pre marital sex. . . . Can you even say you don't do one of those? If you don't more power to your, you are stronger than most but you probably cant say that. Do you even think those sins are wrong? My guess is no, right?

April 2002. You should be afraid. I'm afraid for your souls. I do pity you for the wrath that Heavenly Father will lay upon you in the prison of your next life. You're sons and daughters of perdition. Lay hold of the iron rod and follow the straight and narrow path. Repent and be made clean again. Time is still on your side.

May 2002. i am very disapointed in you two. you two have been publishing Anti-LDS material for a long time. you two are going nowhere. you two need to get a life. you two are driving yourselfs down to Hell.

i testify to you that the CHURCH OF JESUS CHRIST OF LATTER DAY SAINTS, is the true and only living church upon the whole face of the earth. God has told me that the BOOK

OF MORMON is true. God has told me that the LDS church is true. "NO i was not tricked by satan. dont use that excuse either.

i dont want to hear any justifications, or Lame excuses. you two need humbled big time. you two need to have your hearts soften.you two may e-mail back to me with your response of my letter. but dont you dare, Start e-mailing ANTI-LDS literature to me. i dont mean to be harsh, but you two need to give your Anti business a rest, and get a real job.

Sincerely, the guy who you will thank someday.

May 2002. I don't know if anyone else has noticed this yet but I was looking through Saturdays church news (May 4th) and I saw a very interesting picture of the newly completed Nauvoo temple. There are eight round windows around the top of each side and inset in each of these windows is a pentagram. There is an enlarged photograph of one of these windows in the church news! I couldn't believe my eyes. Not a star of David but an occult pentagram! Why is that there? And why would they show case it so prominently in the church news?

Don't they realize what a pentagram represents? I have a copy of D. Michael Quinn's "Early Mormonism and the Magic World View" and I am going to be reading it with great interest in light of this discovery.

May 2002. I just want to thank you for the wonderful freedom you have helped me achieve. I have just broken free from the church this last month, and I have never felt so good about myself. I have questioned the teachings of the church for over 7 years, but was too afraid to say anything to anyone.

With your help, and the help of others who have found the truth, I have finally been released from the doubts, from the guilt I felt because I couldn't follow something so ridiculously false.

I am almost ashamed that it took me so long to see; even now I have friends converting or friends on missions that I would so much love to share this freedom with. I admit I am a little afraid, since the church has been finding new and improved ways of warping the truth. For example, at the library in Provo, UT, every controversial book on the church is either missing or has been locked up in a "Special Collection". I appreciate that all the books I want to read, you provide. Perhaps with the information you provide, someday we'll all be free. Thank you!!

June 2002. I really get a giggle from some of the email comments from LDS members that were published in the May 2002 Salt Lake City Messenger. By the way another well research and informative issue as usual. I would just like to say to the LDS members that are so critical of the Tanners. Due to your comments, certain key phrases, and your anger I can conclude that a lot of young people (under 30) are posting the messages.

First of all, persecution of Christians is not new; we have endured it for centuries.

Second, you really should be thanking the Tanners. You would not be able to post what you wanted to say had the Tanners not defended the right to free press over the internet. LDS authorities want to censor information to the public.

Third, the Tanners believe in doing their homework, do you? Remember that Mark Hoffman white salamander letter? LDS authorities were about to accept the letter...but the Tanners felt that the documents were forged.

Hmmmm let's sum it up. The Tanners saved the LDS from the white salamander, protected your right to have freedom of press on the internet, and have endured your attacks. Well this shows a deep love for the LDS people if you ask me. In Utah the harvest is truly ripe and the laborers are very few.

May God Richly Bless You,

June 2002. You are a nincompoop! Take my name off your mailing list. I've no interest, none-what-so-ever, in any thing you have to say. Keep your garbage at your door, not mine.

June 2002. Just a comment—I am a Christian, and I know that Mormonism is a cult.

But for those LDS members who complain and put you all down, i want to say something about. I find it interesting how they can say they practice love, and have the love of Jesus, when they hate people who put it down, and how they can call us demons and devils. Maybe one day, they'll realise that they are following a religion built on hate and people, not on Jesus's grace.

I am praying for you all, on getting the truth out. Matthew 17:20" . . . if you have faith as small as a mustard seed . . . Nothing will be impossible for you." May Jesus continue to use you to fight the good fight against evil.

July 2002. Subject: YOU GUYS ARE NUTS!!!!!! To whoever is making this stuff up — I just came across you website and I have to tell you, I think you're pretty clever! I mean, it's amazing how you twist the truth around like that! Where's your conscience?!?!? We don't go around twisting about in your faith . . . if you even have faith in God. Do you even believe in God, or do you just go around twisting the truth of His true church??? Like I said, YOU GUYS ARE INSANE!!!!!! But, thanks to GOD, you have your free agency ... so believe what you want . . . PSYCHO'S!!!!!!!!!!

July 2002. . . . Hi there . . . I am a Christian living in Southern California. I wanted to thank you for your book. I read it several years ago when living in Arizona and being "courted" by many Mormon friends who wanted to convert me. Showing them your book and studying with them THEIR OWN materials, the Lord used me to actually win two over to the truth of Christ. Thank you so much!! . . . Blessings on you and your ministry!

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